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Hollywood and the White House

It's a wrap, Mr President



Guardian 2 with European weather

OnLine

Using genes to boost crops

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Screen: Kenneth Branagh's alternative Hamlet

Playing Shakespeare for laughs



Plus Budget guide in this section

President urges republicans and Unionists to go to negotiating table

A bold step forward for peace



All smiles (secret servicemen excepted) as Clinton and Major meet the public in an unscheduled walk from Westminster Abbey to Downing Street PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Clinton praises Major initiative

Michael White
Political Editor

PRESIDENT Clinton swept through London yesterday on a wave of optimism that his arrival in Belfast this morning will galvanise both sides in the Northern Ireland conflict to embrace the new Anglo-Irish negotiating framework as the best opportunity for peace in a generation.

In a day which mixed the pomp of an official visit with the drama of international diplomacy, John Major harnessed the president's direct challenge to Sinn Fein and its political rivals to his own message: Whitehall's insistence on a symbolic surrender of arms by the IRA is "not a matter of dogma, but of practicality," he said.

The "practical" need to build Unionist confidence in the peace process also saw the Prime Minister show unexpected warmth during Commons exchanges towards the Unionist leadership's controversial calls for an elected assembly in Northern Ireland, a move which the nationalists and their allies oppose.

The assembly option will be up for discussion under the much-delayed twin track negotiating formula agreed with the Taoiseach, John Bruton, late on Monday night. Mr Major told MPs as he reminded paramilitaries on both sides that "if they mean peace, they don't need guns and Semtex".

With London and Dublin in open but courteous disagreement on the tactics of so-called arms decommissioning — the other leg of the 11th-hour deal — Mr Major and Mr Bruton won warm praise from Mr Clinton yesterday for their efforts.

"I can't say enough to the British people how much I appreciate and admire the Prime Minister in taking this kind of risk for peace. This is not an easy action for him to take — not an easy action for Prime Minister Bruton to take," he told a VIP audience in the ornate Peers Gallery of the House of Lords.

But the crucial passage for Ulster's suspicious factions came when the president, who called the initiative a "bold step forward for peace", cited the difficult path to settlements in the Middle East and Bosnia — also discussed in yesterday's two hours of talks at No. 10.

"My message to the IRA is that the twin track process has provided a mechanism for all the parties honourably now to bring their concerns to the table and be heard. In the end, peace means peace and we are all going to have to support that.

"The message I will give in public is the same as the message I will give in private. The framework set out by Prime Minister Major and Prime Minister Bruton is the best opportunity I have seen to resolve all these issues and I think it should be embraced. I hope it will be."



The President and Hillary Clinton's hectic shortened programme — which ends in Dublin tomorrow — included laying a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey, a walkabout in Whitehall and meetings with the Queen and Tony Blair. But the Anglo-Irish deal had guaranteed an upbeat mood.

When he spoke to reporters in Downing Street Mr Clinton sidestepped endorsement of London's timetable for arms decommissioning, which will now be examined by a three-man international commission under former US senator and Clinton ally George Mitchell.

In the afterglow of friendly talks, Downing Street refused to be dismayed and revealed that the White House party had been surprised — and delighted — to learn that Britain's contribution to the new peace-keeping force in Bosnia will be as large as 13,000.

Whitehall is emphasising that Mr Mitchell, aided by a Canadian and a Finn, as yet unnamed, will be examining the commitment of the paramilitaries to partial arms surrender as well as the methods, but in an advisory

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Currying favour with the beasts

Sketch

Simon Hoggart

PRESIDENT CLINTON spoke to the Houses of Parliament in the Royal Gallery. With its embossed wallpaper, gleaming red and gold, and gilt decorations, the place gives Americans a chance to get a sense of something they rarely see — the inside of an Indian restaurant.

It also allows us to enjoy one of our oldest traditions — telling each other that, say what you like, we still put on the world's finest rituals.

They began long before the president's entrance. The Leader of the Opposition (John Redwood) arrived, closely followed by the Leader of the Opposition to the Opposition (Robin Cook).

Then, ablaze in a shiny purple dress, Lois Blasenheim, researcher and companion to the traditional figure of Dennis Skinner. So as well as the Queen's Beasts, we had the Beast's Queen.

More characters from the long march of British history began the long march down the gallery. The Lord Great Chamberlain. The Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, and — Robin to his Blackman — the Yeoman Usher of the Black Rod. The First Secretary of State, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Michael Heseltine (though since these three were the same person, the procession was shorter than it might have been.)

A ravishing creature with long blond hair and black tights rose to welcome Mr Clinton. It was a moment of pure suspense. Would he invite her back to his motel room? He did not, for two reasons: first because Hillary was there, and second because it turned out to be the Lord Chancellor, in a wig.

Another famous wigged figure was bobbing up and down to get a better look. The Lord Chancellor intoned: "Our parliamentary institutions have much in common, but there are also significant differences." Yes, one reflected, they have Newt Gingrich, but we have Michael Fabricant.

"We recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of the end of world war two," Lord Mackay continued. "and we reflected then on our relationship." And how you, Mr President, were nowhere to be seen, he might have added, but didn't.

Mr Clinton rose. In all modern presidential speeches, the setting is used as a backdrop for the soundbites carefully prepared for the evening news back home. In this task, the president is assisted by the White House press corps, a court as large and as loyal as enjoyed by any medieval king. They lined the walls.

But first, Mr Clinton had news for us. It appeared that the US navy is to name one of its new ships after a celebrated prime minister.

We gasped. After all, warships are usually grey, wet and liable to be sunk at any moment. Surely not . . ?

No. It turned out to be the USS Winston Churchill.

Finally the message, which can be roughly summarised as: "Vote for me next year." But it was dressed up as a cry for continuing American involvement with the world.

But even to a cynic, it seemed to be delivered with real passion. There were those in the US, Mr Clinton said, who thought the time had come to relax behind secure borders. "We have been down that road before. We must never go down that road again. We will *never* go down that road."

In the midst of all the wiggery, flummery andelectioneering, it was an important moment, vividly expressed. It will be remembered.

Building societies in rush to cut interest rates

Cliff Jones, Mark Milner and Larry Elliott

BRITAIN'S mortgage lenders stepped up the pressure on the Chancellor for cheaper borrowing when they unilaterally cut the cost of home loans yesterday. With the housing industry disappointed at the lack of help in the Budget, Britain's biggest mortgage lender, the Halifax, led the way.

The cut — followed and in some cases exceeded by other lenders — came despite efforts by Kenneth Clarke and the Bank of England to dampen speculation in the City that a half-point reduction in bank base rates is imminent. But the public comments by Mr Clarke and the actions of the Bank in the money market failed to convince dealers, who believe a rate cut will be agreed at the meeting between the Chancellor and the Bank's Governor, Eddie George, on December 13.

The Halifax's move will trim the cost of the home loan of an average £50,000 borrower by £10 a month. It reduced its standard mortgage rate by 0.25 percentage points from 7.99 per cent to 7.74 per cent, with the new rate taking immediate effect for new borrowers and coming in for existing borrowers from the new year.

Yesterday's cuts were the second time lenders have moved without waiting for a base rate reduction. In September the mortgage rate was cut by 0.35 per cent, even though base rates have been unchanged since February.

At a press conference the Chancellor said "I will not play fast and loose with interest rates. I will protect the economy from short-term political pressure."

The Abbey National followed the Halifax's move within minutes, by reducing its tiered rates by 0.2 per cent starting at 7.79 per cent for loans of less than £60,000, falling to 7.74 per cent for mortgages up to £100,000, above which the rate drops to 7.69 per cent.

Nationwide Building Society undercut its rivals with a drop of 0.3 per cent to 7.65 per cent. The biggest cut came from Northern Rock Building Society, which slashed its rate by 0.4 per cent to 7.59 per cent.

The Cheltenham & Gloucester said it would cut its rate and borrowers would benefit from the promise to undercut the average of the mortgages offered by the top five lenders by 0.25 per cent.

Clarke would need to cut tax to 20pc to restore incomes

Larry Elliott and Sarah Ryle

KENNETH CLARKE needs a drastic cut in income tax to 20 per cent next November just to repair the damage to family incomes caused by the tough Budgets earlier in this Parliament, it was revealed last night.

According to calculations for the Guardian by accountants Coopers & Lybrand, a household on average earnings is still £480 a year worse off than it was in 1992 even after Tuesday's tax cuts.

The independent analysis — which includes the impact of all indirect taxes such as VAT and excise duties as well as income tax — shows that it will require a huge giveaway Budget in 1996 to return taxpayers to the position before Norman Lamont began the programme of rolling tax increases in early 1993.

A four pence cut in the basic rate of income tax from the current rate of 24 pence would just cover the £40 a month net loss suffered by the average family, who will be courted heavily by all parties in the run-up to the election.

The Coopers & Lybrand figures give a more in-depth look at what has happened since the Budget of 1993 than the Treasury's calculations, which only look at the impact of income tax changes. Since both Chancellors avoided putting up the basic rate of income tax, the Treasury tables omit the many increases in indirect taxes.

Major losses
Pounds lost per month from tax changes since 1992/93 by annual income.

Single person

£10,000 -6.73

£20,000 -25.17

Married person

£10,000 -23.23

£20,000 -40.23

Source: Coopers & Lybrand

Every category of taxpayer other than pensioners are significantly worse off than they were before the first Budget of this parliament.



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Workers preparing to remove asbestos from Chantry Point, Paddington, used to house the homeless despite warnings of a hazard to health MAIN PHOTOGRAPHS: PHILIP WOLMUTH

Homeless 'put at risk' in asbestos-ridden tower blocks

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

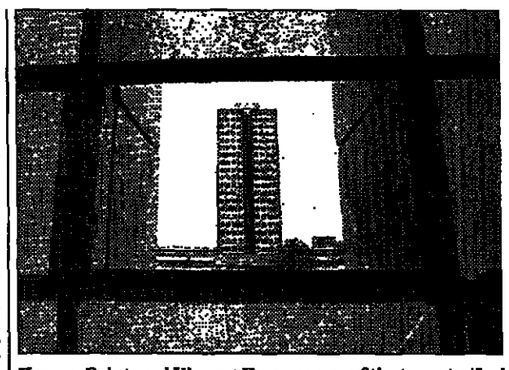
A CONFIDENTIAL independent investigation has accused the Conservative-run Westminster council of acting unlawfully and putting the health of more than 100 homeless families, and their 150 babies and children, at risk by placing them in tower blocks which it knew were riddled with asbestos, some of it in a most virulent and dangerous form.

A 200,000-word report commissioned by the council and now with John Magill, the district auditor, warns that the council could face substantial damages if any of the families suffer asbestos-related diseases.

The findings add a further twist to the long running row involving the former council leader, Dame Shirley Porter, and nine other officials in the "Homes for Votes" scandal.

The report by John Barratt, former chief executive of Cambridgeshire county council, includes documentation showing council officials, including Graham England, then housing director, were aware of the dangers six years before the tenants moved in.

A report on Hermes Point and Chantry Point in Paddington, prepared for Mr England, revealed on February 10, 1983, that asbestos was "even more widespread than recently contemplated" in partition walls, heater cupboards, linen cupboards and doors in nearly all the flats and sprayed asbestos — a substance banned in 1974 by the Department of Environment because of its virulence — was present "in the ceiling of the lift lobby on each floor". The report urged the asbestos be removed as "a matter of urgency", adding "the level of loose asbestos could present a health hazard".





Hermes Point, and Vincent Kamara, one of the tenants: 'I wish we had remained homeless'

The report shows that in 1987, after no action had been taken, Dame Shirley attempted to move in homeless tenants from other wards, but she was rebuffed by Patricia Kirwan, then housing chairwoman, because the blocks were riddled with asbestos. Yet in 1989 a secret meeting chaired by Barry Legg, then chief whip, approved the letting of the flats to homeless families even though no work had been done to remove the asbestos. This began after tenants had moved in.

Vincent Kamara, one of the tenants, said last night: "When we moved we brought our baby, Bilal, with us. There were chips coming away from the cupboard and we kept having to clear up dust because Bilal was always playing with the flakes. It was only when the council workmen came in dressed like spacemen that we found out about the asbestos. I wished we had remained homeless."

Tonight a BBC television programme, Public Eye, will quote doctors warning about the "small but significant" dangers to people, especially children, from asbestos.

The council denied there was a danger from asbestos when the tenants moved in, in September 1989. However by July 10, 1991 after the tenants realised what was happening and the council had to go to court to remove the last of them, Sheila Anne Brass, the principal environmental health officer, said: "The problem is that the sprayed asbestos is losing its adhesion with the result that fibres are leaking into the tower blocks through, for example, the heating and ventilation system. Asbestos is a very dangerous material even in very small quantities."

The tower blocks have since been demolished.

Mr Legg was not available for comment last night, and Mr England was on holiday.

Key players in council's long-running troubles

WESTMINSTER is the most important Conservative borough in Britain, with Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament and Whitehall lying within its borders, *writes David Hencke.*

But the council has been dogged by the "homes for votes" scandal, in which it allegedly sought to gain advantage in the 1990 local elections by moving homeless people from Conservative marginal wards to Labour strongholds or out of the borough. Principal characters included:

☐ **Dame Shirley Porter**, the Tesco heiress listed by Vogue as the 20th wealthiest woman in Europe. Leader and Lord Mayor of Westminster for nine years, and accused of being the principal architect of the plan. Now commutes between Tel-Aviv and Palm Springs.

☐ **John Magill**, the district auditor. Presides over the longest running council investigation in Britain; final report not expected until January. Provisional report found against Dame Shirley and nine other councillors and officials and proposed surcharges of £21.25 million against them. He recently suggested that the surcharges should be revised to £29 million.

☐ **Barry Legg**, Dame Shirley's former chief whip. Now Conservative MP for Milton Keynes South West and supporter of John Redwood. Recently criticised by pensions ombudsman over his management of £20 million of pensioners' money for FMC, a subsidiary of Hillsdown Holdings.

☐ **David Weeks**, who succeeded Dame Shirley as council leader. Was accused by Mr Magill of wilful misconduct in his handling of the affair. Once had parliamentary ambitions but now takes a back seat in council affairs.

☐ **Dr Michael Dutt**, a councillor who was seeking a parliamentary seat. Committed suicide after the district auditor's provisional report was published.

☐ **Graham England**, housing director. Provisional findings by Mr Magill concluded he was involved in alleged gerrymandering because of notes he sent to Dame Shirley and other councillors. Now Westminster's director of external relations.

☐ **Peter Hartley**, a former housing chairman. Was at centre of a previous row as he authorised the sale for 15p of three Westminster council cemeteries which had to be bought back after public furore. Has now left the council.

☐ **Patricia Kirwan**, former housing chairman. Blew the whistle on the "homes for votes" scheme.

'Obscene' profit fuels water anger

Nicholas Bennister and Martin Wainwright

YORKSHIRE Water, which is bringing in 14 million gallons of water a day by tanker to prevent customers being cut off, faced outrage yesterday after it reported a 48 per cent rise in profits and an increased payout to shareholders.

Customers described the profit figures as obscene and a slap in the face, after six months of hosepipe bans, repeated water cuts and huge disruption from the biggest emergency tanker operation in Britain.

They called for the money to be paid straight back into mending leaks — which account for 30 per cent of Yorkshire's water loss — and building a pipeline grid to transfer water round the county during drought.

Frank Dobson, the shadow environment secretary, said the profit figures were an insult to the people of Yorkshire. He revealed that figures from Ofwat, the water industry watchdog, showed that Yorkshire Water accounted for a third of all unplanned and unwarned interruptions to customers' water supply in England and Wales.

Helen Jackson, the Labour MP for Sheffield Hillsborough who chairs the Parliamentary Water Group, said: "There is no question that the problems in Yorkshire this year could have been forecast in advance. These profits show that the infrastructure has been mismanaged over the last few years and not enough investment has been put in.

"The company is more concerned about keeping their shareholders happy than supplying their statutory duty to customers. I think the customers will be very angry."

The company tried to play down the 48 per cent profit rise which left pre-tax profits for the six months to September 30 at £99.5 million. A spokesman said last year's figures had been deflated by a one-off £25 million charge to cover redundancy costs. Without that, this year's rise would have been only 10 per cent.

Sir Gordon Jones, the company chairman, said that despite the drought which had affected water resources in West Yorkshire, no customers had had their supplies interrupted.

He said the situation remained critical and added that the company planned to spend an extra £75 million to provide additional water supplies and improve the grid system so more water could be pumped into West Yorkshire.

About 650 tankers are bringing water to the company's reservoirs and treatment works from Northumbrian Water's Kielder reservoir and from other sources at a cost of £3 million a week. The tanker operation may have to continue into the new year.

The company's full year profits are expected to be hard hit by the cost of the anti-drought measures, which have so far cost £20 million.

Councillor David Green of Bradford, who helped to persuade Yorkshire Water to opt for tankering instead of rota cuts, said: "We have argued throughout that failure to invest in the supply system led directly to the threat of cutoffs. These figures prove that this was indeed the case, and the public will be rightly furious. The system has been so heavily milked that it has reached breaking point."

Clinton hails twin-track initiative as 'bold step forward for peace'

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capacity which London can in theory reject. The trio will not be able to question London's insistence that some IRA gesture on arms is necessary before Sinn Fein joins all-party talks.

While a relaxed Mr Major admitted that the president's visit had "concentrated minds" Mr Clinton stressed that the US would not try to "dictate terms or make decisions" in the proposed preparatory talks involving all Northern Ireland's parties over the next three months.

It did not prevent speculation that he may use the first visit of a US president to Northern Ireland to press Gerry Adams on the arms issue today. But as Mr Blair led all-party Commons support for the new Anglo-Irish communiqué, it was clear that yesterday's euphoria has not removed substantial roadblocks.

The Official Unionists' leader, David Trimble, initially condemned the deal as a fudge which only postponed the decommissioning issue. But he avoided outright condemnation.

Mr Bruton predicted that "a sense within Unionism that they want to take control of their own future" would draw Unionists towards a settlement. The mainly-Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party was also positive.

For its part, Sinn Fein promised a considered response. Mr Adams, facing pressure from militants and determined to avoid internal splits, said: "We want to interpret it positively and make it work. John Major may not." The party chairman, Mitchell McLoughlin, added: "I think prudent people will take their time and will consider very carefully before making a definite judgment."

Kinnock scratched by Santer's claws

John Palmer in Brussels

A FURIOUS Neil Kinnock traded fire yesterday with Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission, over an extraordinary public rebuke in which Mr Santer appeared to question whether Mr Kinnock had a strong enough personality to win key policy debates on a single European currency.

Mr Santer was reacting to assertions by Mr Kinnock, the transport commissioner, during a confidential briefing of British industrialists last week that the 1999 deadline for European monetary union (EMU) was unrealistic.

"If there is one member of the college [commission] who hesitates, or continues to express some scepticism on certain points, I can only say he may not have enough of a strong personality to convince his colleagues in the college," Mr Santer said.

An angry Mr Kinnock later demanded that he withdraw the accusation of weakness.

Mr Santer issued a second statement last night. "I have made it clear that remarks made by Neil Kinnock are damaging to the policy and purposes upheld by the College of Commissioners. I do not consider, however, that Neil Kinnock has a weak personality and clearly no words of mine should be understood that way."

When Mr Kinnock addressed a Siemens management forum in Bracknell, Berkshire, last Friday, he did not intend his dismissal of the 1999 date as unrealistic — nor his scepticism about early enlargement of the European Union — to become public. But other commission members are furious that he has broken ranks before next month's EU summit in Madrid at which EMU and enlargement will be discussed.

Mr Santer's dismissal of Mr Kinnock's doubts took many in Brussels by surprise. "It is very strong language to use. But I, too, found what Neil Kinnock had to say about enlargement and the 1999 deadline very disturbing," a senior commissioner said last night.

Other commissioners want to know to what extent Mr Kinnock's views reflect a possible shift in Labour front-bench policy in London. Mr Kinnock and Robin Cook, Labour's foreign affairs spokesman, are known to have exchanged views in the past few weeks about a single currency and the likely outcome of the 1996 conference which will review the Maastricht treaty.

Mr Santer insisted yesterday that monetary union would happen in 1999 and predicted that "the sceptics and the doom-mongers will be proved completely wrong". He also predicted agreement in Madrid for the name of the new currency. The current favourite is "Euro".

Other commissioners distanced themselves from Mr Kinnock's proposal that the EU should warn applicant countries in central Europe that full membership was a distant prospect.

The commission insisted yesterday that it would be possible to bring in new member states from Eastern Europe without triggering the collapse of the Common Agricultural Policy or scrapping the system of aid for poorer countries. The commission will give its detailed views on the readiness of individual applicant countries "very soon after the end of the 1996 intergovernmental conference".

This implies that negotiations with perhaps 10 countries in central and Eastern Europe, including Cyprus and Malta, could begin as early as 1998 or 1999. The first new members might join by the year 2000, with others following in stages. But the new member states will have to accept some limit on their full entitlement to EU farm and aid benefits for periods of up to 10 years or more.

The commission accepts that reform of the CAP will have to continue, but it puts the eventual cost of extending the farm policy to countries in Eastern Europe at about £8 billion by 2010. "We must remember that all of these new countries together only produce about 4 per cent of the output of the existing 15 EU member states," Hans van den Broek, the foreign affairs commissioner, said yesterday.



Operating without benefit of anaesthetic

First night

Anne Karpf

Trust
BBC Radio 4

FOR a series satirising the changes in the NHS, Trust is an inspired title. It succinctly reveals not only what's been lost, but also the simultaneous misappropriation of language. It also warns us that the writer, Wendy Lee, operates with laser accuracy and doesn't administer an anaesthetic.

Set in Bottomley Memorial, an appalling NHS trust hospital that is touting for custom from fundholding GPs, Trust opens with a practitioner phoning around a city's hospitals from an ambulance bearing an elderly chap in need of an emergency gastrectomy — in his GP's words, a "bleeder". The ambulance zig-zags across town as each hospital undercuts the next.

The poor, dying chap fetches up at Bottomley Memorial, where the registrar and houseman, realising that surgery would be futile, charitably put him at the end of the operating list. He duly dies before the first incision.

Enter Mike Blunt, the hospital's surgical directorate manager (and the latest in Keith Allen's clearly relished grotesques) who happens upon the ruse, having bugged his staffs' hangouts, including even the sluice room. Enraged that the failure to operate will deprive the trust of a juicy £4,500, Blunt persuades the two doctors (with the assistance of a £1,000 sweetener) to pretend that the man died during surgery, thereby launching a nice line in income generation: you collect the money without having to make a single surgical cut.

We've come a long way from the Richard Gordon school of bedpan humour, with its James Robertson Justice medical bad 'un whose chief peccadillos were arrogance and the swanky way he peered at patients over his specs and bow tie. Cardiac Arrest and its ilk have introduced a savage genre of medical malpractice.

But Lee's target is more precise — the almost total substitution of financial considerations for clinical ones. Blunt wins the auction for a patient by tendering (the linguistic ironies are inescapable) £2,500, including after care and tea for two visitors. He doesn't pay even lip service to the concept of patient care, but comes alive at the prospect of chinwagging with the Happy Hamburger chain about catering arrangements.

And yet the opening episode had one major flaw: I rarely laughed. Satire seldom induces belly laughs, but I would have appreciated the odd chuckle. The reasons for its absence soon became apparent, with the case of the post-operative patient of a non-fundholding practice who needed another night in hospital, but was summarily discharged. Satire? No, news. Too many of Lee's vignettes sounded as if they came fresh from The World At One.

Will she therefore be impelled towards a broader, blacker, indeed cruder humour, to differentiate herself from daily occurrences? Are the Tories, so keen to lower economic inflation, guilty of causing inflation in humour? Will all our best gags become our worst real incidents? The series' medical adviser is Dr Neil Haughton.

Labour acts on 'loony left' council

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

DAVE CHURCH, the controversial leader of Walsall council, was suspended yesterday from representing Labour by the party's National Executive Committee as part of an attempt to root out an alleged hard left caucus within the Walsall party.

The NEC ruled that a case could be made that Mr Church and four others, including the council deputy leader, John Rothery, had organised a party within a party under the name of the Walsall Socialist Group.

The decision means that the council's deeply divided Labour group will have to strip Mr Church and Mr Rothery of their leadership positions.

A furious Mr Rothery described the allegations against him and his colleagues as lies, and Mr Church said that attempts to oust him would fail.

The NEC's action is the culmination of five months of negotiations between the national leadership and Walsall over its radical plans to delegate responsibilities to 55 neighbourhood councils. The Conservative Party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, scored a political hit in the summer by depicting the council leadership as "loony left".

A three-strong investigation team, run by Labour deputy leader John Prescott, has held talks with Mr Church, most recently at party headquarters last week when Mr Prescott hoped that Mr Church had understood the NEC's determination. In particular, the NEC hoped that the Labour group would rescind plans to dismiss 30 council staff. However, the dismissals were agreed.

One of the investigating panel, Clare Short, said yesterday: "When we went to Walsall we believed that we could conciliate, but the people with whom we were negotiating broke their word."

A Labour spokesman said the team had negotiated in good faith, but "there was a growing sense that they were being let down at every turn". The NEC decision to ban the five from holding office or representing Labour was taken by 23 votes to 2 with both Tony Blair and Mr Prescott present.

The other three Walsall party members are a councillor, Brian Powell; Steve Baggott, chairman of the Walsall North constituency party; and Keith Rochelle, treasurer of the Walsall Socialist Group. All five are banned from attending meetings of their constituency general committee.

Mr Rothery said "It is complete nonsense. This talk of a tight, disciplined group is not true."

The existence of the Walsall Socialist Group, previously the Walsall Tribune Group, is not denied, but its members say that many Labour councils have caucuses. Mr Rothery said: "Walsall Socialist Group is a discussion group which meets to talk about national issues."

Its meetings were open to anyone, it had no rules, premises, membership list or constitution, and it did not discuss council policy.

Claiming that the latest allegations were an afterthought, Mr Rothery said: "This started in the summer when the Walsall Labour Party was suspended for alleged bullying and intimidation. This has been completely dropped now because there is no truth in it. Now we are hearing allegations about a party within a party. All I can conclude is that there has been a decision nationally that can perhaps win a few votes in the South-east to be seen to be strong against us.

"All we are doing is carrying out the policies we have been elected on, completely in line with national Labour Party policy. We have done nothing and don't want to be seen in any way as rebels."

Mr Church said: "This has been done because the Labour Party want to gain the votes of a few middle class people in the south of England. They have sacrificed two local council leaders in the Midlands to do this.

"The point is that I will not give up — not until the day I die — and will still carry on supporting the policies that I have tried to introduce in Walsall."

Dr Mawhinney said: "Mr Blair's Labour Party is in turmoil in Walsall. Labour's PR department may be run centrally, but real Labour is on show on the streets of Walsall."



Tory MP David Ashby outside the court yesterday and, below, Dr Ciaran Kilduff, with whom he denies having a homosexual affair

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

A tale of two anoraks in MP's libel suit over 'gay slur'

Joanna Coles watches a star performance in the High Court



ONE should never underestimate a Tory MP. Just when it seemed things couldn't get more bizarre, they promptly did.

"You see, you put it on like this," David Ashby was muttering from the witness box as he wrestled with a long corrugated plastic tube, resembling an elephant's trunk, which he was cleverly balancing on his nose. Completely unfazed, the jurors in court 13 managed to look even more bored than usual.

They perked up only a little when he rummaged in his bag, then proceeded to pull what appeared to be a jockstrap on to his round and by now harassed face. This was, he declared to the High Court, his "sleeping contraption". Indeed, he could not really sleep without it. "You plug it in you see," he explained sincerely, demonstrating a lengthy flex attached to a large computer-type box. "Sleep apnoea machine" is apparently the correct term, he announced. Ever since it had been prescribed by the National Health Service he had never spent a night without it.

It helps to be a lawyer in court, especially if you are the chief witness.

Mr Ashby is suing the Sunday Times and former editor Andrew Neil for libel over an allegation that he was homosexual.

He is also a criminal barrister. He is also Conservative MP for Leicestershire North-West. Poor Richard Hartley QC. Every question he asked on behalf of the newspaper was answered with the cumulative experience of 12 years of questions in the House of Commons and 32 years of questions at the bar. In short, Mr Ashby utterly refused to be intimidated by either wig, gown or some of Mr Hartley's more vigorous suggestions, which had been thoughtfully supplied by Mr Ashby's sister.

Ashby (tossing head and possibly stamping feet): "I'm not prepared to take my sister's word on anything."

Hartley (scoffing): "What, not even her age?"

Ashby (scoffing even harder): "That's the *last* thing. Ha!"

(Some time later ...)

Hartley: "When you refer to your beloved sister, you are I presume being sarcastic"?

Ashby (pleased): "Very, I'm afraid."

It was a duel of the finest legal kind. Mr Hartley alleged Mr Ashby had been spotted picking up men in a gay pub in Chelsea, west London, wearing a blue anorak.

Impossible, snorted Mr Ashby. His navy anorak stayed in his constituency and was worn only for walking the dogs.

In London, he retorted crossly, he preferred to sport a dark green jacket with a corduroy collar. The judge nodded gently as if familiar with the sort of garment. He savoured each argument as if it was fine claret.

Mr Ashby admitted he had visited the pub, but "if it's a gay pub I don't know. Chelsea is a very weird area." The jury gave a collective if barely perceptible nod.

Like all the best comedies it had elements of pathos too. Mr Ashby explained that he could not have had a homosexual affair with one Dr Ciaran Kilduff because he was ... "impotent".

He looked down, the court held its collective breath in case he burst into tears, and Mr Hartley was momentarily silenced.

Hartley (nonplussed): "Why mention it?"

Ashby (continuing to look down, apparently even more nonplussed by this sudden revelation): "... Embarrassing ... yes."

At this point the judge intervened to point out that a homosexual affair would indeed be less likely if Mr Ashby was truly impotent. But Mr Hartley was back on his feet and unimpressed: "Impotence doesn't prevent two men sharing a double bed together ... And it wouldn't prevent the showing of affection."

The solitary men in the public gallery shrunk into their overcoats and winced quietly to themselves. Crown Court was never this good.

Prime bidder for railway dropped

Rebecca Smithers: Political Correspondent

RESURGENCE Railways, the private sector company chosen as the preferred bidder for one of the first privatised railway lines, has been dropped by the Government after failing to prove that it has enough money to take over the franchise.

The company, which is understood to have submitted its final bid for the plum Great Western Trains last Friday, had requested an extension to provide further financial information.

But a senior political source said last night: "The fact was that they couldn't provide adequate financial resources. They were dropped earlier this week." He said the original favourite to take over the franchise, the management buyout team headed by current director Brian Scott and backed by bus company FirstBus and venture capital company 3i, was now the preferred bidder.

The bids for the first three franchises — Great Western, London Tilbury and Southend Rail and South-West Trains, are being handled by the Government-appointed Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (Opraf).

Although it had hoped to announce the winning bidders in the second week of December, the latest hiccup could delay the process: Great Western runs InterCity services from London's Paddington to Wales and the South-west.

The news comes days after the Guardian revealed that John Ansdell, the chief executive of Resurgence Railways, was a director of a double glazing company which collapsed owing £57,445 to creditors. Mr Ansdell, a chartered accountant, was also finance director of Trafalgar House, the property and shipping company, when it was reprimanded by the Finance Reporting Review Panel over presentation of accounts.

Other key members of the consortium are Mike Jones, a middle manager with British Rail Telecommunications and an active member of John Major's Huntingdon constituency association, and Richard Morris, who is health, safety and operations director of Eurotunnel, and was British Rail's area manager of Paddington.

The company was formed in January and has been the most low-profile of all the bidders. They have included large organisations such as the bus group Stagecoach, and the fast-ferry group Sea Containers, which pulled out after becoming disillusioned about the grim investment prospects for the railways.

Last night, Labour's transport spokesman Brian Wilson, who called last week for the resignation of Transport Secretary Sir George Young and franchising director Roger Salmon, said: "My call for their resignation is reinforced by this news. The fact is that they were prepared to hand over the Great Western Railway to this company before these revelations were made. That is a measure of how desperate they are to privatise at any cost and the same problems will recur on that basis."

The news will further undermine the Government's troubled privatisation programme, as it faces a judicial review over proposed cuts in services.

Murdoch plans global network

Lisa Buckingham

RUPERT MURDOCH is planning to launch a global 24-hour television news service to challenge Ted Turner's CNN, which he believes is moving to the left of the political spectrum.

Mr Murdoch, who has been regarded as a friend of Mr Turner, told an audience of business executives in Boston that it was "time for a truly objective news channel."

Mr Murdoch has just shut Today, the only one of his British newspapers seen as supporting Labour, and has removed the BBC's news service from his Asian satellite operation in an attempt to improve relations with the Chinese government.

Without attempting to justify what many viewers would regard as the bizarre assertion that CNN showed liberal bias, he joked: "I don't know whether it happened with my friend Ted marrying Jane Fonda or giving up lithium."

Jane Fonda was renowned in the 1970s for her leftwing views. Mr Turner was prescribed lithium for a mild form of manic depression, an illness alleged to be behind some of his more extraordinary business tactics such as threatening to kill himself if bankers were less than understanding and literally throwing himself at the feet of executives from whom he was attempting to extract business.

Mr Murdoch gave no details of his plans for a 24-hour news network other than to say it would certainly be in operation within two years. He said the service was "the great missing link" in the global media empire of his News Corporation group.

BSkyB, the British satellite operator in which Mr Murdoch's group is the largest shareholder, already operates a rolling news service in co-operation with Reuters Television which was recently extended beyond Europe to Australia.

News Corporation's American television station, Fox, also has a deal with Reuters in an attempt to challenge the domestic US news providers such as CNN and the three networks, CBS, ABC and NBC. Fox editors assemble a news service using Reuters' international and American coverage with input from local Fox bureaux.

Reuters executives said yesterday that they were not in negotiation with News Corporation's Asian television business, Star TV, on a similar deal which could fill the missing global link for Mr Murdoch.

However, Sam Chisholm, the chief executive of BSkyB and widely regarded as Mr Murdoch's right-hand man in TV, said earlier this year that the agreement with Reuters would "provide a platform for the global expansion of Sky News."

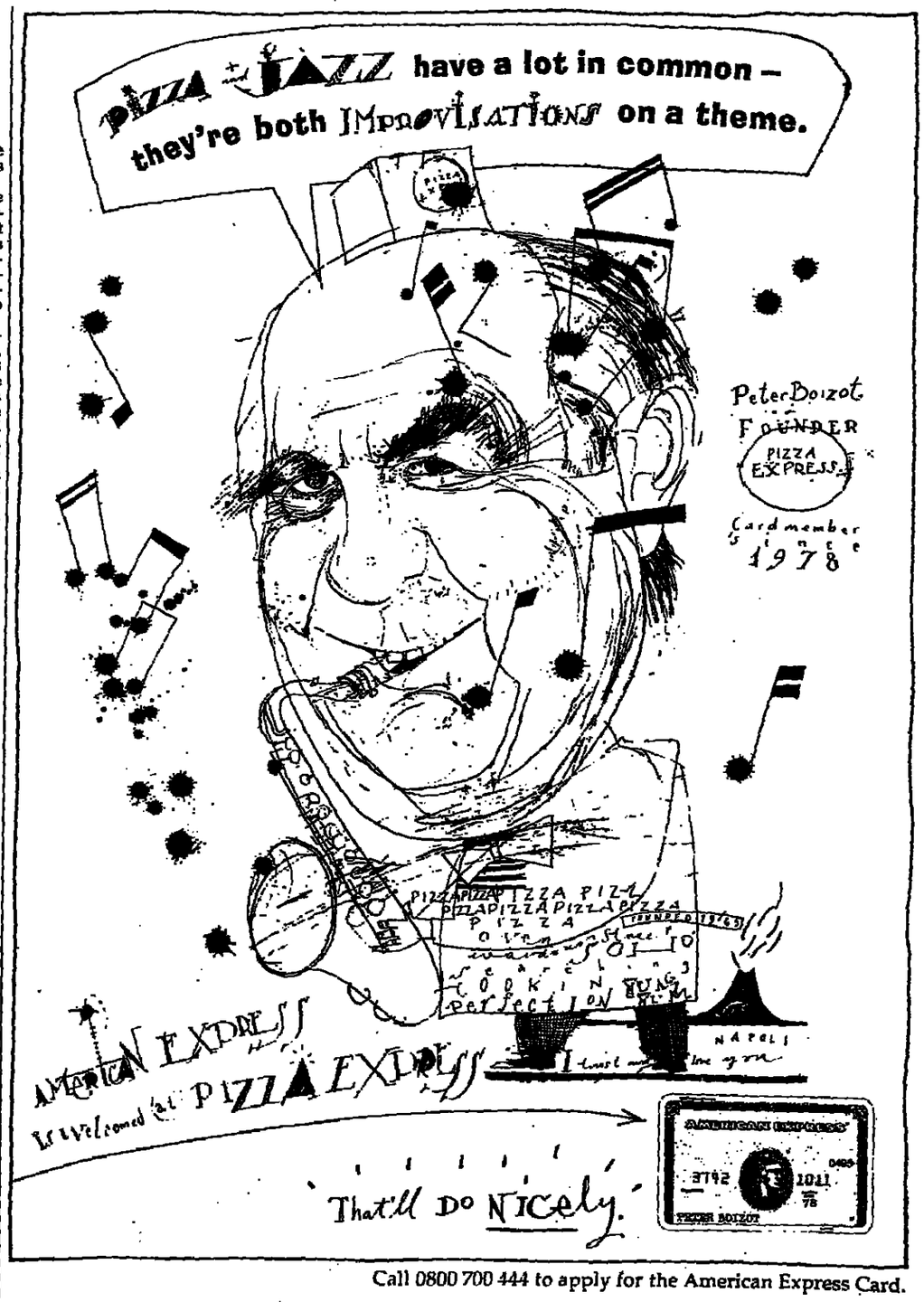
Sky News is understood to have been losing about £30 million a year, but City analysts estimate that the association with Reuters TV could lop approximately £10 million off that.

News Corporation was rumoured to have planned a bid for CNN before Mr Turner's company, Turner Broadcasting System, agreed to be acquired for $5.2 billion during the summer by Time Warner of New York.

After a spate of movies that hailed conservative values, the Hollywood liberals are fighting back. "Sure, I made the shallow-thinking and mean-spirited Republican senator the bad guy. But in my perfect world Robert Dole and Newt Gingrich *are* the bad guys," says director Rob Reiner.

Celluloid presidents

G2 cover story



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President goes walkabout while wife hosts session 'to trade thoughts or ideas about common interests'

First Lady holds court for women

Georgina Henry joins Mrs Clinton to talk of challenges over morning coffee

THE invitation was for morning coffee and cookies, although not the kind the First Lady famously denounced early on in the presidency before she was forced to prove that she could bake cookies as well as the next woman.

We had been summoned to the state dining room of the US ambassador's residence in Regent's Park for what is now an established part of Hillary Rodham Clinton's overseas routine — inviting women to talk about women. It was to be an "open dialogue" on "the particular challenges each person faces in today's world".

Smart in blue and rust, hair in a French plait, she shook us all by the hand, sat herself between Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, and Baroness Blackstone, Labour's foreign affairs spokeswoman, and announced she wanted to "trade thoughts or ideas about common interests".

In fact she listened more than she spoke in an animated discussion that flowed from education and training (why girls are doing better than boys) to parenting (why work and children don't mix), taking in the glass ceiling and the limited stock of New Men.

Ranged round the table were 23 women from education, politics, business, the arts and media — including Gail Reebok of Random House, Today presenter Sue MacGregor, Sue Slipman of the National Training and Enterprise Council, the theatre director Deborah Warner and local government official Sarah Ebanja who, the White House invitation list noted, came from south of the River Thames (Lewisham council) . . . "where most persons of color live".

The First Lady looked as if she had heard it all before. With the caution forced on her by early batterings from Republican critics, her views were less forcefully expressed than those around her.

Asked why attacks on single parents were the totem for the American right, she cited US research showing children from single-parent families were more likely to get into trouble with the law, do less well at school and seek assistance from the state.

It ended with a spirited exchange about whether women should be pessimistic or optimistic about their situation in the 1990s, which split participants along age lines, with Baroness Blackstone reflecting that it was a lot harder 30 years ago.

Mrs Clinton played safe by observing that it was both "the best and the worst of times" to be a woman.



Ladies in waiting . . . Hillary Clinton and Norma Major at Westminster Abbey, where the president laid a wreath PHOTOGRAPH: LOUISA BULLER

Clinton cuts a dash on saunter to No 10

Gary Younge promenades with the president from Westminster Abbey

JEAN Donalds from Philadelphia was having none of it. As Bill Clinton and John Major went on a short walk from Westminster Abbey to Downing Street, she kept her camera in her case and set off to see the sights.

"We have enough of him at home and we don't like him much there, so we especially don't like him on holiday. We've got a budget squeeze on like you folks and it hurts," she said.

Half an hour earlier, Mr Clinton's 17-car cavalcade — including his private ambulance — had sped through London's morning rush hour as he arrived, with wife Hillary, for a wreath-laying ceremony at Westminster Abbey's tomb of the unknown soldier.

He left the abbey pursued by packs of journalists — themselves under the eagle eyes of around 80 twitchy looking security men — and made for some rainswept supporters with placards reading "We love Clinton" and "California loves Clinton".

With camera's whirring and a helicopter overhead, he then turned to face a barrage of searching questions from passers-by.

"I asked if he was going to Ballybunion in County Kerry for golf," said Collette O'Hart from Ireland. Mr Clinton apologised but said he could not because of the Bosnian situation.

"I just shouted out 'Hi there Bill, how are you doing?'." said construction worker Paul Wydenbach. "He came and shook my hand and said: 'How are you?'. He had a good firm handshake as well."

Mr Clinton then sauntered down Horseguards Parade, where children from the American School in London shrieked youthful shrieks usually reserved for pop stars.

Then, with a few final waves, he went into Number 10. For Mr Major it had been a leisurely stroll. But with Bosnia behind him and Ireland ahead, Mr Clinton was clearly on a roll.

Heart victim in 999 delay

A HEART attack victim was delayed on his way to hospital when the ambulance crew stopped to swap shifts. The paramedics drove to an ambulance station and handed over to another crew.

It took Peter Jones, aged 41, a cook, of Southsea, Hampshire, more than 40 minutes to make the four-mile journey to the Queen Alexandra Hospital in Cosham, Hampshire. Ambulance service chiefs yesterday ordered an inquiry and apologised.

Mr Jones asked his young son to dial 999 when he suffered chest pains. The ambulance arrived eight minutes later and the crew asked if they could phone to find out if there was a bed available at nearby St Mary's Hospital. About 15 minutes later, when it emerged there was no space at St Mary's, they went to Queen Alexandra Hospital.

Official records show the ambulance arrived 41 minutes later. The delay was caused by the crew stopping at the Eastern Road ambulance station for the changeover at the end of their shift.

Mr Jones said: "They didn't seem to think it was as serious as I did. The second crew realised I was having a heart attack and I had a needle stuck in my arm straight away." He spent a week in hospital.

Anthony Marsh, Hampshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust contract manager, said the crew had been confident Mr Jones was not in danger, but their action was not acceptable to a professional ambulance service.

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Labour claims £1m rail sell-off debt signals 'folly of dogma'

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

THE first passenger rail company to be privatised has run up £1 million debts and been told it must pay cash in advance to continue operating trains.

A memo from the British Railways Board's director of finance obtained yesterday by Brian Wilson, Labour's transport spokesman, reveals the crisis facing Waterman Railways, which bought BR's Special Trains Division last year — taking over the running of football special and other charter trains throughout the network.

Some services have slumped amid recriminations about the high charges payable to Railtrack and BR.

Mr Wilson said last night: "This is another astonishing indictment of rail privatisation. How many more companies will find themselves unable to meet charges which now make every movement on the railways uneconomic?"

He said the ability to hire special trains was widely valued across the country, but now the "whole thing is in jeopardy because of the dogma of privatisation".

He added: "I sympathise with Pete Waterman, who is a genuine rail enthusiast. He came into this without knowing enough about the crazy charging regime which has transformed the economics of the whole network. If privatisation goes ahead, franchisees will face the same problem."

Rail Express Systems, a BR division itself about to be privatised, provides Waterman with locomotives, maintenance and route planning.

The memo, from David Redfern to senior rail managers, says Waterman Railways have "not been paying Rail Express Systems' invoices and . . . approximately £1 million is now outstanding. As a result RES has refused to operate any more trains without cash in advance."

Mr Redfern says he has no evidence to suggest Waterman Railways is financially unstable, but it "is in dispute with BR over certain conditions alleged to have been agreed when Special Trains Division was sold". He suggests managers should carry on trading as normal but monitor the position closely if Waterman is not paying its debts. But he adds: "If Waterman is not paying its debts, adopt the same tactics as RES and insist on cash in advance."

Neither the company nor Mr Waterman was available for comment last night.

Mr Wilson said: "All the services provided by the Special Trains Division are now hanging by a hair. The Transport Secretary, Sir George Young, should make it clear whether he is prepared to intervene in such circumstances to save the public from the folly of rail privatisation."

BBC unveils its Christmas winners

Andrew Culf
Media Correspondent

A DOUBLE helping of EastEnders, and Christmas specials featuring Victor Meldrew and Hyacinth Bucket, are expected to secure the BBC its annual ratings triumph.

The corporation's £46 million holiday package, unveiled yesterday, includes 38 drama and entertainment specials, and terrestrial television premières of 15 movies.

On Christmas Day, one of the most fiercely contested viewing nights of the year, two separate episodes of EastEnders on BBC1 will vie with an hour-long Coronation Street on ITV to deliver what could be the year's highest audience.

The BBC traditionally outperforms ITV over the holiday, spending at least £15 million more on its line-up. Last year BBC1 had seven of the 10 top-rated shows in Christmas week, and a 48 per cent share of the Christmas Day audience, compared with ITV's 31.6 per cent.

Alan Yentob, controller of BBC1, said: "It is clear ITV are not opting out of the battle, but Christmas is an incredibly important part of the year for the BBC. The public has great expectations, and we do not have to worry about what advertisers or owners think."

The line-up is dominated by home-grown comedy, including an hour-long edition of One Foot in the Grave — which last year won the highest Christmas audience of 15.14 million — Keeping Up Appearances, Goodnight Sweetheart, the Lenny Henry Christmas Show, Knowing Me, Knowing Yule with Alan Partridge and a classic Morecambe and Wise.

Drama is headed by an adaptation of P. G. Wodehouse's comedy Heavy Weather, starring Peter O'Toole and Richard Briers, and a comedy caper by Nigel Williams about the National Lottery, It Might Be You.

BBC2 repeats its acclaimed adaptation of Jane Austen's Persuasion on Christmas Day, and Catherine Zeta-Jones and Joan Plowright head the cast of a version of Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native.

Screen Two premières include the medieval mystery tale The Hour of the Pig, starring Colin Firth (Mr Darcy in Pride and Prejudice), Helen Mirren in The Hawk, and John Hurt and Kerry Fox in the baby-trafficking thriller, Saigon Baby.

Film highlights include Indecent Proposal, starring Demi Moore and Robert Redford, Patriot Games, Last of the Mohicans, and Hot Shots on BBC1, and Much Ado About Nothing, Easy Rider, My Fair Lady, Fiddler on the Roof and The Sound of Music on BBC2.

Wallace and Gromit return in A Close Shave, a new animation from the Oscar-winning director Nick Park, and there are reruns for A Grand Day Out and The Wrong Trousers.

BBC2's Christmas Day highlight is a new version of Puccini's La Bohème, while BBC1 screens the Rolling Stones' Voodoo Lounge concert tour.

Documentaries include Nick Broomfield's film on the Hollywood madam Heidi Fleiss, and The Page Three Story, marking the 25th anniversary of the tabloid pin-up.

Ratings battleground

BBC1
3pm: The Queen
3.10: Noel's Christmas Presents
4.05: Film: Hook
6.30: EastEnders
7.00: Auntie's Brand New Bloomers
8.00: Keeping Up Appearances
8.30: EastEnders
9.00: One Foot in the Grave
10.10: Film: Indecent Proposal

ITV
3pm: The Queen
3.05: Film: Ghostbusters II
5.05: The Wind in the Willows
6.30: Robson and Jerome Christmas Special
7.00: Coronation Street Christmas Special
8.00: Film: Sister Act
10.00: Outside Edge Special

Family pleads to let woman die

Erlend Clouston

PROLONGING the life of a woman who has been in a coma for nearly four years would be cruel to her relatives, a court deciding Scotland's first right-to-die case was told yesterday.

Richard Metcalf, a neurologist, said there was virtually no hope for a patient whom doctors are afraid they could be accused of murdering if they withdrew the apparatus that keeps her alive.

Law Hospital Trust is petitioning the Court of Session in Edinburgh for the right to allow Janet Johnstone, aged 52, "to die peacefully with dignity and with the least distress". Her husband and daughter support the action. The case is going ahead despite the fact that the Lord Advocate, Scotland's senior law officer Lord Donald Mackay, has declared that the Court of Session has no jurisdiction in the matter.

In a report to the court, his office even warns that there is a possibility that staff at the Carluke hospital could face a murder charge if they disconnected the tubes that enable Mrs Johnstone to breath and eat. At the moment, he notes, "her condition is stable . . . she is well looked after and . . . she is not suffering any pain".

Mrs Johnstone was admitted to Law Hospital on January 14, 1992, after taking a large drug overdose. She told doctors on arrival that she had been "unhappy for a long time, and very nervous".

She had a convulsion on the same evening and was transferred to the intensive care unit at Stobhill Hospital, where she was diagnosed as having brain damage. She was returned to Law Hospital eight days later in what is now officially classified as "a persistent vegetative state".

In its submission to the court, the hospital trust complains that despite being apprised of the issues in the case the Lord Advocate has given no undertaking to refrain from criminal prosecution if Mrs Johnstone's life is terminated without her consent.

During questioning by Colin McEachran QC, for Mrs Johnstone, Dr Metcalf, consultant neurologist at Southern General Hospital, Glasgow, told the court he was unaware of any patient recovering after spending so long in such a condition.

Dr Metcalf said he endorsed the opinion of Law Hospital consultant Iain O'Brien that liquids and food should now be withdrawn from the patient. In his opinion, keeping Mrs Johnstone alive in this situation "is artificial and indeed I would say cruel". Her family and friends would find it upsetting for her to be preserved in this state.

Norwegian environmentalists have blown the whistle on a navy's cavalier way of storing spent fuel, writes **James Meek** in Moscow

Russia's nuclear waste cover-up



DOZENS of spent Russian nuclear fuel containers, each with as much radioactivity as was released in the first French nuclear test in the South Pacific this year, have been sitting in a field near the Norwegian border for more than 30 years, it was revealed yesterday.

Pictures of the containers and a damning account of the growing nuclear storage crisis facing the Russian navy were released yesterday by Bellona, the Norwegian environmental group, which said Russian authorities were blocking attempts to carry out a full scientific study of the dangers.

In October, members of Russia's state security service, the FSB, raided Bellona's office in the Arctic city of Murmansk, seizing computers, disks, cameras, printers and a modem.

Russians working for Bellona have been repeatedly detained for questioning. FSB agents have searched private flats in Murmansk and St Petersburg and the state prosecution service is considering whether to bring charges of breaking secrecy laws.

Describing the spent fuel storage facilities at Zapadnaya Litsa, Russia's main nuclear submarine base, Frederic Hauge, a Bellona activist, said yesterday: "It's a big, big mess, and no money has been spent on it for many years.

"Of course Russia has a choice. It can keep all this information secret. Then there are no real grounds for international co-operation, through which Russian scientists can develop new waste management technology. We need a minimum of information if we are going to solve problems like this."

Zapadnaya Litsa, one of the most militarily sensitive parts of Russia, is a bleak fjord on the Barents Sea just 30 miles from Norway. Set apart from the moorings for most of Russia's nuclear submarine fleet is Andreeva Bay, a dilapidated array of ramshackle buildings close to the shore.

Here, in three circular underground tanks, 21,000 highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel containers removed from Russian submarines are stored.

The tanks were built as an emergency measure after a serious accident at the site's storage facility in 1982, when coolant water began leaking. The building has not been decontaminated, and gamma radiation tens of thousands of times more dangerous than the maximum annual dose for nuclear industry workers has been detected at the bottom of the pools.

The tanks were built with a design life of only four years, but the oldest is still in use 12 years later. All three are full and the Northern Fleet, which recently had electricity cut off at its command centre for non-payment of bills, cannot afford to send spent fuel for reprocessing in Siberia.

Most alarming is the condition of 32 containers with spent fuel from the first Soviet nuclear submarine, which were dumped in a field at Andreeva Bay in 1962. They have been left uncovered ever since, exposed to the harsh Arctic climate.

According to Bellona, no decision has yet been made about what to do with them, though they still hold 200 to 220 fuel containers.

"We are not technically good enough to assess the risks," Mr Hauge said. "But each of these containers has a similar amount of radioactivity to that produced at Mururoa, and there are 30 of them."

Apart from the Andreeva Bay dangers, the navy has 52 decommissioned nuclear submarines with spent fuel and reactors still on board. Up to 10 of these, which were described by one Russian official last week as a "source of super-high danger", can never be made safe and will have to be buried.

In 1994, President Boris Yeltsin yielded to public pressure to give the Russian nuclear watchdog, Gosatomnadzor, powers to inspect naval facilities. The navy refused to let the inspectors in, counter-lobbied and forced Mr Yeltsin to rescind his decree in July.

Greeks rush to be near ailing leader

Fears are mounting as Papandreou's health grows worse. Helena Smith reports

THOUSANDS of socialist supporters flocked to the Athens heart hospital where the prime minister, Andreas Papandreou, was battling for his life yesterday.

Sometimes tearful, highly emotional, they came from across Greece to pay what many believe will be their last respects to the man who changed the political landscape of their country.

Mr Papandreou's condition continued to worsen last night, when he underwent kidney dialysis to cleanse his blood for a third time in less than 48 hours. The prime minister, aged 76, who was rushed to the clinic suffering from pneumonia 10 days ago, has been put back on a respirator in the hospital's intensive care unit. But the clinic's vice-president denied reports that the prime minister was "clinically dead".

"The situation is difficult but ... his brain is functioning fully and his heart is working without problems," the surgeon, Gregory Skalkeas, said.

Doctors have warned that Mr Papandreou should not remain on the respirator too long because of a risk of secondary infections.

"He has to get off the respirator very soon to avoid secondary infections which at this point could be fatal," a doctor at the hospital said.

Hospital officials said a top American dietician was due from the United States to try to strengthen the prime minister's lungs with special nutrients. Mr Papandreou has been fed intravenously since entering the Onassis hospital and newspapers said he had lost weight.

The Greek Cypriot president, Glavkos Clerides, flew to Athens to be at Mr Papandreou's bedside and followers left cards and gifts at the hospital gates.

The Orthodox faithful said they were praying that the prime minister would live to mark today's holy holiday of St Andreas. In the Orthodox calendar, saints' name days are imbued with the importance of birthdays and are traditionally celebrated.

Although Mr Papandreou, an ex-Marxist and economics professor, had long eschewed religion, he has embraced the Christian Orthodox faith in recent years.

His wife, Dimitra Liani, who is a devout believer, has brought a host of clerics to her husband's bedside. Several have brought gifts, including icons and waters from the holy island of Tinos.

The dramatic decline in the prime minister's health has triggered panic in the government and fuelled fears of a power vacuum.

Despite being in frail health since undergoing open-heart surgery in 1988, the autocratic leader had steadfastly refused to appoint a successor to lead his Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok). His refusal to name his successor has exacerbated widespread disgruntlement within Pasok, which Mr Papandreou founded in 1974.

Yesterday, ministers held urgent cabinet meetings to discuss finding a replacement for the prime minister. Despite official denials, the fractious party has been embroiled in a power struggle between would-be successors from rival groups.

Under Greek law the party's parliamentary group must elect a new leader of the government within three days of Mr Papandreou formally relinquishing power. The new leader of Pasok could be elected by a party congress at a later date.

Mr Akis Tsochadzopoulos, a hardline party apparatchik has been carrying out prime ministerial duties, but few believe the close confidante of Mr Papandreou wields enough influence to be elected. There has been party infighting about Dimitra Liani's controversial role as her husband's chief-of-staff.

Favourite candidates for the succession include Gerasimos Arsenis, the defence minister, and Costas Simitis, a reform-minded moderate.



Faster Christmas ... Two Santa Clauses drive around a fairground in Essen, Germany, on an 'Energizer' to promote a motor show on December 1-10 PHOTOGRAPH: KARL-HEINZ KREIFELTS

News in brief

Tutu to head truth panel

The Nobel prizewinner, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, is to head South Africa's "Truth Commission" investigating the crimes of the apartheid era, President Nelson Mandela's office announced yesterday, *David Beresford in Johannesburg writes.*

The 17-strong panel includes churchmen, human rights activists and lawyers. It is expected to start hearings early next year.

Brady in hospital

Former White House press secretary James Brady, who was seriously injured in the 1981 assassination attempt on President Reagan, was taken to hospital after his heart stopped during a visit to the dentist on Tuesday, a spokeswoman said. — AP.

Refugee accord

Four central African heads of state yesterday signed an agreement which former US president Jimmy Carter said would enable large numbers of Rwandan refugees to go home in safety from Zaire and Tanzania. — Reuter.

Jaffna advance

Sri Lankan troops made a breakthrough in their six-week advance on the rebel citadel of Jaffna when they captured its main administrative building yesterday. — Reuter.

Big march in Rio

A sea of demonstrators brought central Rio to a standstill on Tuesday in a mile-long march against violence in the city. — Reuter.

Afghan fighting

Government soldiers overran Taliban rebel-held positions east of the Afghan capital yesterday in their first big military advance in weeks. — AP. Leader comment, page 24

Holy feminism

The Pope yesterday hailed the achievements of feminism, saying it has championed "the dignity of the woman". The pontiff called feminism "in great part legitimate" but criticised feminist undervaluing of the Virgin Mary. — AP.

'Robust' rules of engagement ● Housing crisis threatens ● Sarajevo Serbs protest

Nato troops begin their race against Bosnia's winter today

David Fairhall in Brussels

THE BIGGEST military operation in Europe since the second world war formally gets under way this afternoon when Nato's supreme commander, General George Joulwan, will order his troops to begin deploying in Bosnia.

The Nato peace implementation plan will develop into a race to get 60,000 troops in place, many of them facing atrocious winter conditions, before the Dayton accord begins to unravel. The aim is to take over from the United Nations within four days of the peace agreement being ceremonially signed in Paris. The provisional date for the handover is December 17.

By then secure communications will need to be in place, airfields cleared of mines, key roads secured and skeleton headquarters established in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Gornji Vakuf and Mostar. The Nato-led implementation force (I-FOR) then has 30 days to get its core United States, British and French divisions into the field to supervise withdrawal of the various combatants to their new boundaries.

Nato is aware that this is an unprecedented test of its entire organisation. "The one thing we don't want," said one senior official in Brussels yesterday, "is some bureaucratic confusion on the first occasion that the I-FOR is challenged." Hence the "robust" rules of engagement emphasised by Gen Joulwan yesterday when he briefed defence ministers on what he called the conditions for success. It has become clear that Nato intends to hit back extremely hard at the first sign of trouble.

But first the troops will have to find shelter from the mountain cold and snow. The 1,500 members of a Russian brigade attached to a US armoured division in northern Bosnia are among the few expected to take the wintry conditions in their stride. Frantic local negotiations are under way to commandeer suitable accommodation, water and power supplies, for fear the new force might suffer the indignity of Britain's airmobile brigade, now withdrawn, which got bogged down in the first muddy field in which it pitched its tents.

Most of the enabling force will be British and American. The first 350 British troops, plus a substantial number supporting Nato's rapid reaction corps headquarters, should begin moving on Monday, along with 700 Americans. Tanks and other heavy equipment for the main British force of 13,000 will go by sea. The 20,000-strong 1st US Armoured Divison will deploy by rail from Germany.

Defence ministers also turned their minds yesterday to the urgent need for strong civilian institutions to take over from Nato in 12 months time — when, according to the Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, the allies are all determined to leave — and to achieving a military balance within the rival Bosnian factions before then.

The US defence secretary, William Perry, warned after yesterday's meeting that if, in six months, a military balance cannot be achieved by reducing arms then it should be done by supplying them — to the relatively ill-equipped Bosnian Muslims. He said the US would ensure that. "We don't want to leave in 12 months with the imbalance and instability still there," Mr Perry said.

One sensitive detail still unresolved is what the I-FOR troops should do if they find themselves confronting alleged war criminals, including the Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic. Mr Portillo said he did not believe it was Nato's mission to search for war criminals.

Mark Tran adds from New York: Between 3,500 and 5,500 people are still missing from Srebrenica, the eastern Bosnian enclave captured by Bosnian Serb forces in July, the UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said in a report yesterday.

UN fears Europe will send refugees home in spring

Jonathan Steele

UNITED Nations officials are concerned that European governments may try to push Bosnian refugees back to tents and other temporary shelter in war-ravaged areas.

Pressure for the refugees to return as soon as winter ends is already coming from Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Germany's ban on deporting Bosnian refugees runs out at the end of March.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees does not want refugees to return until they have homes to go to. "The priority is the 1.3 million displaced people who are still in Bosnia," says Ron Redmond, the UNHCR spokesman in Geneva. Next come the 820,000 refugees in the rest of former Yugoslavia, with those elsewhere in Europe likely to return last.

Officials also fear the Dayton agreement may create new refugees in areas to be exchanged, including Serb-held suburbs of Sarajevo. "We would like to see multi-ethnicity, although the signals we are getting are not particularly encouraging," Kris Janowski, the UNHCR spokesman in Sarajevo, said. "Everything is actually reinforcing existing divisions."

The Dayton accord calls for elections within six to nine months after the plan comes into force, and allows people to vote abroad. But officials are concerned at a clause which says: "The exercise of a refugee's right to vote shall be interpreted as confirmation of his or her intention to return to Bosnia." They fear it might be used to deny people asylum.

The UNHCR is also updating the appeal for $71 million (£46 million) of food and bedding which it made to donor governments shortly before Dayton, to cover the first three months of 1996. It expects the new appeal will have to cover a vast programme of housing and reconstruction.

'Our graves will fight against you'

Julian Borger in Ilidza

THE seeds of a revolt against the Dayton peace plan are germinating on Sarajevo's Serb-held rim. In the suburb of Ilidza, 10,000 Bosnian Serbs demonstrated yesterday against the US-brokered settlement which would put their homes under Bosnian government control.

In a patch of open ground between a row of apartment blocks and the grey Miljacka river, one impassioned speaker after another summoned up the ghosts of Ilidza's war-dead to help save the town from an imposed peace.

Out of a jostling mass of banners, one stood out in blood red letters, pledging that: "Our graves will fight against you."

A petite 17-year-old girl called Vanya Vujadin strode to the podium to address the crowd. She wore a colourful and modish cap, but her speech brimmed with the vocabulary of another century.

"How can someone, who has not felt any part of our suffering, change our future with the stroke of a pen?" she asked the assembly. "We have gone through exhaustion, cold and suffering for years and we will keep what is ours. Must we be ashamed of our ancestors' graves?"

Since the start of the war, Ilidza has been the keystone in the Serb wall around Sarajevo, straddling the main road into the city from the west.

When vehicles tried to sidestep the blockade by using a route over Mount Igman, Ilidza's artillery regularly blew them off the hillside.

But for almost four years the people of Ilidza have seen the war refracted through Serb television, and for them Ilidza has borne the brunt.

"They killed us and we killed them. But they are being allowed to live in their own homes, while we are to be driven out," said Vanya, apparently unaware of the "ethnic cleansing" at the heart of the Serb war effort.

At the Dayton peace talks last week, the Bosnian government conceded the division of the country into Serb and Muslim-Croat halves, but in return it was granted Ilidza and Sarajevo's hinterland (home to over 40,000 Serbs) as a guarantee the city would never suffer another siege.

The Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, did not go to Dayton, as he faces an international arrest warrant on war crimes charges. The Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, signed for the rebels and in Ilidza yesterday, he was pilloried as a traitor.

An elderly woman wept at the thought of leaving the graves of her husband and son. Hardly anyone would contemplate cohabitation with Sarajevo's Muslims.

"After four years of killing each other, you are not going to go back to work in the factory and say: 'Hi Muhamed!' " said Vanja.

Out of a dozen local Serbs interviewed, only one — an elderly schoolteacher called Mirko Knejevic — thought reconciliation might be possible. He would stay if the Bosnian government and Nato made him feel safe.

President Alija Izetbegovic promised on Tuesday to protect Serb women and children. The men would be questioned about their war-time role. "He is not exactly pleading for them to stay," was one diplomat's assessment.

If the Bosnian Serbs defy the Dayton accord, the planned implementation force could find itself confronting the Serbs of Ilidza. It is where one of the war's first battles was fought, and it may be where the peace is put to the test.

But labelling people both murderers and pariahs is hardly going to help protect the rights of the infected. "On an emotional level it is easy to understand why the recently diagnosed should want revenge," HIV researcher Rhetta Moran says, "but pushing for prosecution can't be the solution."

G2 page 4

Reincarnation row revives Tibet tensions

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

THE Dalai Lama last night accused Beijing of trying to usurp his spiritual role after Chinese authorities put up a rival to the boy he has recognised as the incarnation of the second holiest figure in Tibetan Buddhism.

In a statement from Dharamsala, the town in the Indian Himalayas that is his home in exile, the Dalai Lama said the Chinese did not have the authority to challenge his choice for Panchen Lama. The last Panchen Lama died in China in 1989.

"It is unfortunate that the Chinese government has chosen to politicise this issue and to appoint a rival Panchen Lama," the Dalai Lama said. "It saddens me that once again the religious sentiments of my people have been deeply hurt and offended."

He said yesterday's dawn ceremony at Lhasa's Johkang temple, in which Tibetan monks and lamas drew lots to determine that the soul of the Panchen Lama had migrated to the body of a six-year-old boy, was highly irregular.

The Dalai Lama concluded his own selection process in May, settling on a boy from a semi-nomadic family. "Because of the unique historic and traditional relations between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama I conducted all the necessary procedures with great care and then determined Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the reincarnation of the late Panchen Lama. Therefore my recognition of the Panchen Lama reincarnation cannot be changed."

Acting under Chinese auspices, Tibetan monks yesterday chose Gyaincain Norbu from among three boys. Pictures released by Chinese television showed the boy looking bewildered under a traditional yellow hat.

Despite his hard line yesterday, the Dalai Lama added that he had tried to co-operate with authorities in Tibet in the search for the reincarnation. Last month, he appealed directly to the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, to recognise his choice.

However, China was unable to forget its initial fury at the Dalai Lama for short-ciruiting the selection process and announcing his own candidate. Yesterday, the authorities resumed their crusade against the original Panchen Lama, saying he was unfit for the role because he once had killed a dog. The child has not been seen since July and is believed to be under house arrest in Beijing.

Yesterday's furore is certain to cause further consternation in Dharamsala which is reeling after the discovery of three Chinese spies — one of whom was employed in the government-in-exile. The trio had arrived in India last December.

Indian home ministry officials say infiltration has been a growing problem since 1992 when the Dalai Lama appealed to Tibetans to flee Chinese occupation and join him in exile. About 5,000 people are believed to cross to India each year, and Tibetan exile authorities lack the procedures to detect spies and agents provocateurs among the new arrivals.

Last year Indian authorities arrested a Chinese agent at Simla who was masquerading as a lama, and three other spies were caught in 1993.

Officials in the government-in-exile were meeting yesterday to discuss the introduction of screening procedures for arriving Tibetan refugees.



China's choice . . . Six-year-old Gyaincain Norbu is named as the incarnation of the soul of the Panchen Lama at a Chinese-sponsored ceremony in Lhasa yesterday

Two die for 'worst swindle'

AP in Beijing

TWO women were executed yesterday for their roles in the worst swindle in modern China. The two were among six convicted of using the Xinxing Industrial Corporation in Wuxi, 620 miles south of Beijing, fraudulently to raise 3.2 billion yuan (£250 million) from 368 enterprises and 31 individuals across China by offering interest rates of 5-10 per cent a month, Xinhua news agency said.

The pyramid scheme financed the interest payments with funds from more investors, in "the worst case of its kind in China", Xinhua said.

At least one official in the Beijing municipal government is reported to have ties to Xinxing, but yesterday's announcement gave no indication whether charges were pending against any top officials in the capital.

Suu Kyi prepares for tough action by the military

Walk-out aims to crack Burma junta

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok

BURMA'S opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, announced yesterday her party has pulled out of a military-controlled convention drafting a new constitution. She said she was ready for the possibility of another crackdown by ruling generals.

Diplomats in Rangoon say the boycott by 91 delegates of her party, the National League for Democracy, is a risky strategy to crack the resistance of Burma's ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) to political reform. They say any chance of success may depend on international support.

The NLD walk-out follows repeated and unanswered appeals by Ms Suu Kyi for dialogue with the junta since her release in July from six years' house arrest. Her call last week for reforms to the convention was rebuffed when it reconvened on Monday.

In toughly worded comments to the press at her Rangoon home yesterday, Ms Suu Kyi said: "We find at this point that we cannot in all honour support a national convention which is not heading for what the people want, which is not in any way desirous of bringing about national reconciliation, multiparty democracy or a constitution that will be acceptable to all the people of our country."

A government statement said the national convention would continue regardless. "The government will not tolerate any attempt to disrupt or destroy the progress and achievements made so far," warned the chairman of the convening committee, Lieutenant-General Myo Nyunt.

Ms Suu Kyi emphasised yesterday: "We are not trying to destroy the national convention, we are trying to make it acceptable to the people of Burma and the international community."

But the increasingly hard-hitting rhetoric of both sides is reviving concern that the Slorc may find a pretext for cracking down on the NLD, Burma's only independent political voice.

Gen Myo Nyunt said yesterday that opposition to the convention dated from Ms Suu Kyi's release. The government statement, using language that some fear may be preparing the ground for action, condemned the protest as "tantamount to totally forsaking and going against the national interest".

Ms Suu Kyi noted yesterday that security agents were now waiting outside the houses of at least three senior NLD members, two of whom were released this year from six years' imprisonment. "There are risks involved and we are willing to face them for the sake of the people," she said. "The NLD was not founded because we wanted a nice and cosy niche for ourselves."

The junta may feel inhibited from such measures at a time when debate is under way in the United Nations General Assembly on a new resolution on Burma and only two weeks before the Slorc chairman, General Tan Shwe, is due to attend a Bangkok summit of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean).

Ms Suu Kyi hopes the NLD protest will prompt Asean countries to consider carefully their relations with Burma. Asean countries have been strong proponents of "constructive engagement" with the Slorc, which has helped generate a flood of interest by Western as well as Asian businessmen. "I think they jolly well should wait," she said.

The main risk for the NLD may be continued stonewalling by the Slorc. "I think she has played her major card," said a diplomat in Rangoon. "What else can she do if they continue to ignore her?"

End of aura for CIA mystics

Martin Walker in Washington

THE last act of three psychics employed secretly for almost 20 years by the Pentagon, at a cost of more than $11 million (£7.3 million), was to predict their own downfall.

"They certainly saw it coming," a CIA spokesman said yesterday.

It is the end of an aura. The mystics of Fort Meade and "Operation Stargate" will no longer be required.

No more casting through the ether to track down the secret hideaway of Libya's Colonel Gadafy so that American bombs would hit the mark — they missed. No more paranormal delvings into the Soviet submarine sheds at Severnomorsk — a rare success.

The project, started by the CIA in the 1970s, was declared unpromising after scientific tests of the mystics' remote viewing ability. Trying to "see" test cards in another location, the psychics achieved only a 15 per cent improvement on mathematical chance.

Because over the years their results had been consistently better than chance, the Pentagon was sufficiently intrigued to take on the study in 1983, installing Operation Stargate at a special facility at Fort Meade, Maryland.

With Ronald Reagan timing summit meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev and treaty signings on the advice of an astrologer, the Pentagon decided "remote sensing" was worth the $1.1 million budget.

In its report on the project, the Defence Intelligence Agency credited the mystics with spotting a new Soviet submarine programme in 1979 and with defining the purpose of mysterious buildings in foreign parts, including Iraqi weapons projects.

They were less successful in interpreting the purpose of new Soviet radar facilities at Dushanbe in 1987, and in pinpointing the location of General James Dozier, kidnapped by Italy's Red Brigades in 1981.

Studies of the programme by academics found "convincing evidence of a real phenomenon", according to Jessica Utts, from the University of California. But the latest study by the American Institutes for Research found that continued support for Operation Stargate "is not justified".

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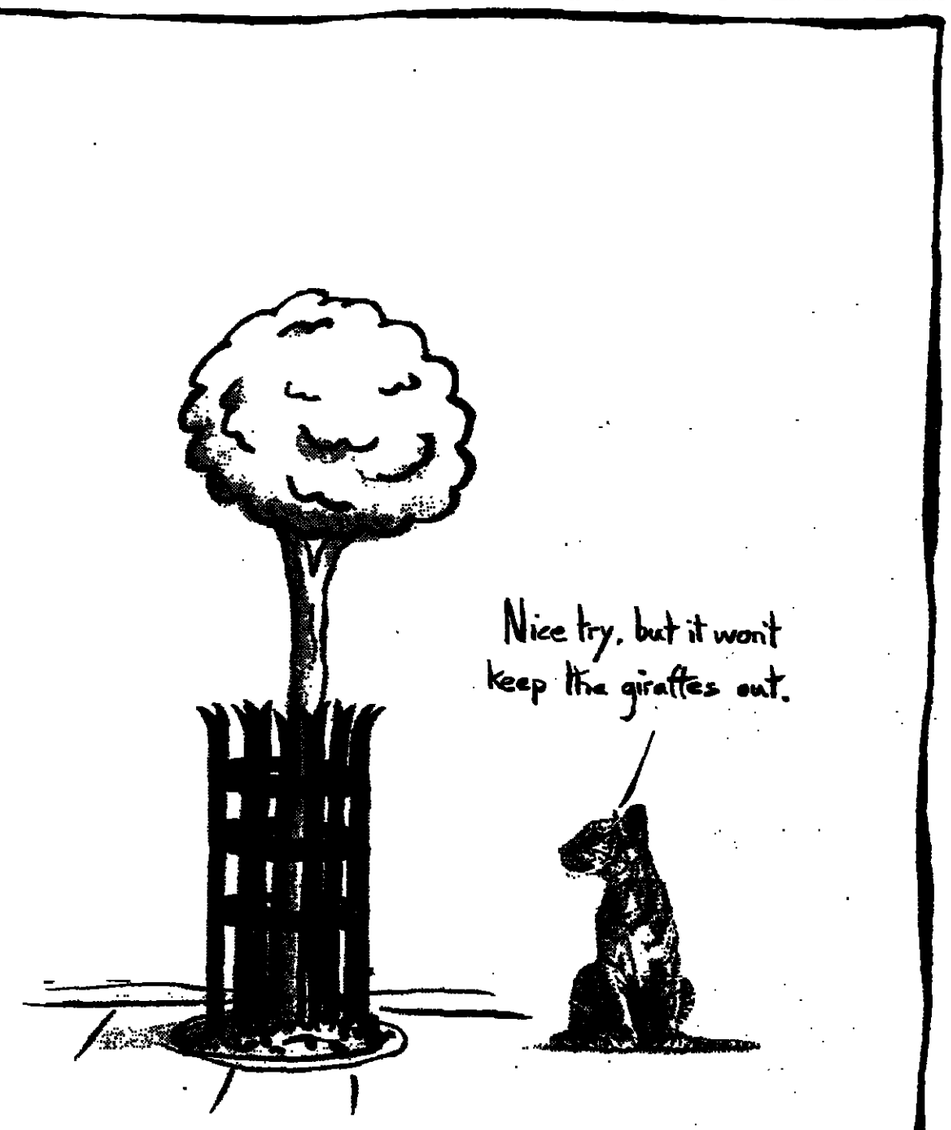
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J Clyde Mitchell

A brave recount in Africa

CLYDE Mitchell, who has died aged 77, was a distinguished scholar working in the fields of anthropology and race relations. South Africa's main contribution to social science.

His early life was nomadic, because his father, a railway worker, was shifted from place to place. Mitchell's first job was as a hospital clerk. During that time, he collected data on the social background of women who had given birth to illegitimate children, by religion and race.

He became a wartime navigator with the South African Air Force and his own apocryphal story was that he flew the Mediterranean with a sociology book propped on his instruments. What he didn't tell everybody was that he flew supplies to the resistance and ferried people from behind enemy lines, including the children of one Yugoslav village where all the adults had been killed.

Post war he applied for a research post at Northern Rhodesia's Rhodes Livingstone Institute — where Max Gluekman was director — submitting his hospital paper as evidence of his abilities. His subsequent fieldwork among the matrilineal Yao tribe, resulted in a classic monograph, using the traditional anthropological methods of dense, participatory research, which helped dispel decades of mystification about "matriarchal" societies. Gluekman had long wanted to develop urban research and now had the ideal person. In 1952, when Mitchell succeeded Gluekman as the RLI's director, a major shift in the institute's research, towards urban Africa took place, which influenced African studies across the continent and, indeed the world. The research examined the new forms of African social life which were emerging, from trade unionism to nationalist political parties and religious movements, and from beer halls to copperbelt mine compounds.

These studies still used some of the "anthropological" methods — small-scale, participatory, face to face — that had been developed in the study of village societies. Under Mitchell's influence, they now also used methods which had been developed in sociology rather than in anthropology, particularly the use of quantitative methods. Out of this grew a new mode of study, which combined the skills researchers had learned when analysing genealogies, with numerical analysis. The result was "network analysis" — a powerful contribution to anthropology and sociology.

When the new University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was established, Mitchell was the obvious man to head the department of African studies. It was, though, a time of great strife in central Africa, under a series of white regimes. White members of the African National Congress were very thin on the ground, but two of them were in Mitchell's department. He was always on the left and identified with the African struggle although he had no taste for the hurly-burly of political activism. Yet when the situation called for people to stand up and be counted, he did so, in his own quiet, dignified and scholarly way. When, in the run-up to Southern Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence prime minister Ian Smith claimed to have consulted African leaders, Mitchell publicly demonstrated that the Africans he had consulted commanded no popular support.

By 1961, he had been recognised, internationally, by the award of the Rivers Memorial Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute for distinguished fieldwork, which pleased him greatly, and had become vice-principal of the University College. But his department had come under governmental attack and eventually, the police invaded the campus. The department was soon broken up. So in 1966 he became professor of urban sociology at Manchester University.

Mitchell's personal life had been no easier. His first wife, Edna, died of cancer, leaving him with the responsibility for four children. His second wife, Hilary, had been widowed, then exiled from South Africa. She settled in Rhodesia where she worked as a medical sociologist, which brought her into touch with Mitchell. He was a diabetic and from time to time we would find him slipping into a coma at his desk. Health considerations led him to accept a fellowship at Nuffield College Oxford since this did not entail the heavy administrative load his Manchester post involved. There, after only a few years, Hilary died from cancer.

With his third marriage, to Jean, there began what one of his friends called a period of "domestic felicity". Academically, too, he was very gratified to be made a fellow of the British Academy. But fate struck again, with further onsets of serious illness, and, eventually, with a disaster. He and Jean were on their way to a holiday in South Africa aboard the Achille Lauro which sank off Somalia. Jean and Mitchell were separated in the dark. She slipped into the sea and was rescued, he had no insulin, and when the US Marines eventually dropped him some, it was the wrong dosage.



Mitchell . . . earthy humour

He was flown to Johannesburg, but his health deteriorated again, involving an operation back in Britain, after which he never became fully well again. As he lay dying, his last paper was published — on the Yao headmen he had studied so long ago.

Mitchell was a lovely man — in seven years he and I never exchanged a cross word — with an earthy sense of humour. He deserved a happier life, though Jean made the last decade splendid, sharing with him bird-watching, rambling, and music.

Peter Worsley

James Clyde Mitchell, sociologist and anthropologist, born June 21, 1918; died November 15, 1995

Martha Hill

Teaching America to dance

MARTHA HILL, who has died aged 94, was a teacher who played an exceptional role in the development of modern dance education in America.

After graduating from Columbia and New York universities she danced with the modern dance pioneer Martha Graham from 1929 to 1931, but her vocation was as a teacher and creator of dance departments. In 1930 she joined New York University as a teacher, then department director, remaining until 1951, while founding other dance departments which have made incalculable contributions to modern dance in America.

In 1934 she became director of the Bennington School of Dance, a summer school at Bennington College, Vermont. It was the first time modern dance had been recognised as a separate art form and Bennington attracted modern dance's greatest exponents. Hill taught there until 1942, becoming the college's first dance department chairman, and when that summer programme evolved into the American Dance Festival based at Connecticut College, in 1948, she was its founding director. The festival saw the premieres of major works by choreographers such as Graham, Doris Humphrey, José Limón, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor and Twyla Tharp.

Hill helped create dance departments at four major institutions, NYU and Juilliard as well as Bennington and Connecticut. She established Juilliard's first dance department in 1951 and directed it until her retirement in 1985 — sprightly, delightful, invigorating although by then in her eighties. She also served as a consultant for the US Office of Education.

Generations of dancers owe her gratitude for guidance, encouragement and friendship and she received many honours, including in 1984 a Mayor's Award of Honour for Arts and Culture from the City of New York. In 1987 a testimonial dinner and recital was presented at Juilliard to which many choreographers trained by Hill lovingly contributed.

Mary Clarke

Martha Hill, modern dancer and teacher, born 1901; died November 18, 1995

Giancarlo Baghetti

Ferrari's unfancied flyer

GIANCARLO Baghetti, who has died of cancer aged 60, was unique among racing drivers in having won the first world championship grand prix in which he took part, although the French Grand Prix of 1961 was to remain his only victory at the highest level.

The son of a Milanese industrialist, Baghetti had been racing saloons and small single-seaters for five years when, aged 26, his appointment with destiny arrived. The previous year he had won three Formula Junior races at Monza in his Dagrada-Lancia, impressing members of the newly formed Federazione Italiana Scuderie Automobilistiche, whose object was to find young Italian racing drivers to replace a generation of stars — Alberto Ascari, Eugenio Castelotti and Luigi Musso — killed on the track in the fifties. Enzo Ferrari had been persuaded to rent one of his grand prix cars to the federation, and Baghetti was the first driver to be invited to take its wheel.

Built to a fresh set of regulations, the 1.5-litre Ferrari, with its twin-nostrilled "shark" nose, made its first appearance at the Syracuse Grand Prix in late April. The works drivers stayed at home for this non-championship event, leaving Baghetti to confront the Porsches of Dan Gurney and Jo Bonnier, the Lotuses of Stirling Moss and Jim Clark, the BRM of Graham Hill and the Coopers of Jack Brabham and John Surtees over a street circuit lined with straw bales.

Attended by works mechanics, Baghetti surprised his rivals by qualifying the new Ferrari in the middle of the front row — and astonished them by winning the race. He was so amazed that after taking the chequered flag he missed the hairpin bend on the lap of honour and went up the escape road.

A few weeks later, against less distinguished opposition, he won a second non-championship race, the Naples GP. Meanwhile Ferrari's full works team had demonstrated its technical superiority in the championship with commanding victories for Wolfgang von Trips in Holland and Phil Hill in Belgium.

Their dominance seemed set to continue on the high-speed road circuit at Rheims, where Hill, Count von Trips and their young team-mate, Richie Ginther, formed the front row when the grid assembled on July 2, a blazingly hot day in the Champagne country. Halfway down the field, and seemingly relegated to his true level, was Baghetti. Sure enough the three works cars flashed past the pits in the lead at the end of the first lap, slipstreaming each other down the long finishing straight, with Baghetti down in 12th place.

So confident were the Italians that the team manager, Romolo Tavoni, hung out the "slow down" signal after 20 of the 52 laps. Yet when von Trips's car blew up, Hill spun on melting tar at the hairpin and stalled, and Ginther pulled off the road, his engine on the brink of seizure, only the debutant was left to save Ferrari's face. By then, using the 30-horsepower advantage over the English and German cars, Baghetti had climbed through the field. And with 50 miles to go he engaged in a final battle with Gurney and

> The Ferrari nipped out of the Porsche's slipstream and took the flag by less than a car's length

Bonnier, keeping his nerve as the two silver Porsches swarmed around him.

There were two laps left when Bonnier pulled into the pits, his engine wrecked. Now Gurney and Baghetti fought it out wheel to wheel, the Californian leading by inches as they started the last lap. He was still ahead at the final hairpin, but as they sprinted down the final straight at more than 150mph the Ferrari nipped out of the Porsche's slipstream and took the flag by less than a car's length. "It was a piece of timing that would have done credit to Fangio," wrote Motor Sport's correspondent, the eminent Denis Jenkinson.

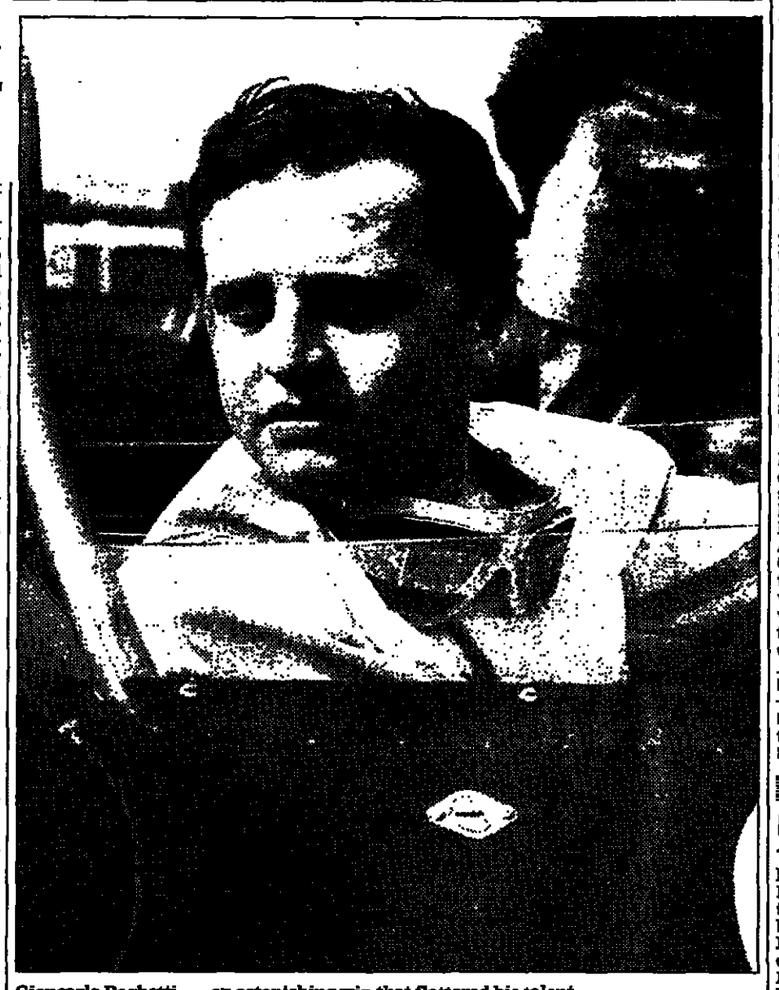
Sadly, the Ferrari's superiority flattered Baghetti's talent. He was never again to scale such heights. Retained by Ferrari for the 1962 season, he suffered from the team's plunging morale and could do no better than fourth at Zandvoort and fifth at Monza. For 1963, he joined the disastrous ATS project, formed by disaffected Ferrari personnel. The car was slow and unreliable, effectively ending his grand prix career, although he struggled through 1964 with a BRM entered by a private Italian team.

A self-effacing man with an enviable collection of suede jerkins, Baghetti also enjoyed some success in sports cars, with two second places in the historic Targa Florio, but at the end of the sixties he moved into journalism, eventually becoming editor-in-chief of the Milan-based magazine Auto Oggi.

"Gifted with remarkable sang-froid, calm and measured in his ways, he does not give the impression of an extraordinary character," wrote Enzo Ferrari, who was fond of his gentleman-drivers, not least because they seldom required much in the way of financial recompense. "But at the wheel, he is a revelation."

Richard Williams

Giancarlo Baghetti, racing driver and journalist, born December 25, 1934; died November 27, 1995



Giancarlo Baghetti . . . an astonishing win that flattered his talent

Rosalind Cash

Glamorous heroine with a mind of her own



Picture of the seventies . . . Cash in The All-American Boy

WITH her high cheekbones, sensuous mouth and fiery eyes, Rosalind Cash, who has died of cancer aged 56, personified the seventies slogan, black is beautiful. And she started in pictures when America's black citizens were being depicted in a more diverse manner. She presented a politicised early seventies persona, playing outspoken heroines, determined to get their own way.

Cash grew up in segregated Atlantic City before moving to New York with $20 in her pocket. "I had a cold-water one-room apartment in Harlem sharing a kitchen I didn't dare use because of the rats." Her first stage appearance was at the Harlem YMCA in Langston Hughes' Soul Gone Home in 1958, followed by a small role in the musical Fiorello! at the New York City Center, but she was still forced to take odd jobs — shop assistant, hospital aide, waitress, nightclub singer. Her break came in 1968, after being trained in acting by Edmund Cambridge and Vinnette Carroll, when she joined the new Negro Ensemble Company (NEC), which was dedicated to putting on the works of black playwrights and touring deprived areas.

Performing with the NEC was, said Cash, the most invigorating time of her life. One of her most successful roles was Adele Eloise Parker, a modern black woman, in Lonne Elder III's Ceremonies In Dark Old Men. In May 1969, she came to London for Peter Daubeny's World Theatre Season at the Aldwych where she appeared in God Is A (Guess What?)

Cash's film career began two years later with small parts in Klute and The All-American Boy, and an important one in The Omega Man, an apocalyptic saga, in which she saves Charlton Heston's life. Looking like Angela Davis with her puffed-up Afro hairstyle, Cash, as a mutant member of a Manson-like cult called The Family, comes on strong, though the role is softened by the end.

In Melinda (1972), a movie in the blaxploitation genre, she was shown at her best — a woman on the edge, releasing her anger. She made a reputation, to her dissatisfaction, portraying good-hearted, sassy tarts in films such as Richard Fleischer's The New Centurions (1972) and Sidney Poitier's Uptown Saturday Night (1974).

After playing a prostitute in Dr Black, Mr Hyde (1976) — the black doctor's monstrous alter-ego is white — Cash became more choosy. She was offered a greater range of parts on television, and appeared in Kojak, Starsky And Hutch and the Cosby Show, as well as TV movies, including A Killing Affair (1977) as the wife of a cheating OJ Simpson, and in Maya Angelou's Sister, Sister (1982).

Her high-octane personality later found a niche in the daytime soap opera, General Hospital, in which she played Mary Mae Ward, a matriarch of a large family, and which allowed her a chance to use her fine, underused singing voice.

In 1992, Cash entered the Black Film-makers Hall of Fame, which echoes with the cries of struggle.

Ronald Bergan

Rosalind Cash, actress, born December 31, 1938; died October 31, 1995

Birthdays

Hilary Armstrong, Labour MP, 50; **Richard Crenna**, actor, 69; **George Graham**, football manager, 51; **Frank Ifield**, singer, 59; **Gary Lineker**, footballer, 35; **Radu Lupu**, pianist, 50; **Virginia Mayo**, actress, 75; **Marguerite Porter**, ballerina, 47.

Norman Potter

Due to an editorial error the age of Norman Potter (*obituary, November 29*) was given wrongly. He was 72.

Death Notices

ARMENGOL, Mario Hubert 1909-1995. Painter, sculptor, designer, cartoonist, raconteur, gourmet. Warm friend to many. Born Catalunia, lived London, Cornwall and Nottingham. Died 27th November aged 86, after a long illness. Cremation December 1st, 3.45pm, Wilford Hill Crem, Nottingham. Family flowers only, donations to Stroke Association. Much loved by Rolindez, Lindsh, Paul, Guy and all his many friends. His work will live forever

PARROTT, Suddenly on November 25th at Llandough Hospital, Cardiff, Emeritus Professor John Edwin, DSC, FINSTP, FIEE of the University of Wales, Cardiff and Millbrook Road, Dinas Powys, S.Glamorgan, dearly loved husband of Barbara, loving father of Edward and Andrew. Funeral on Monday, December 4th. Service at Thornhill Crematorium, Cardiff at 2pm where friends please meet. Family flowers only, if desired, donations should be sent to OXFAM, Banbury Road, Oxford

In Memoriam

GRIFFITHS, John, died 30th November 1993 remembered with love.

To place your announcement telephone 0171 611 9090

Jackdaw



Dead Beats

WHAT IS the principal legacy of the Beat Generation? What is its signal contribution to American life? What does Beat culture actually amount to? Is it artistically significant or only indicative of a sociopathologic condition? In other words, are we speaking of achievement or breakdown?

These are among the questions that ought to have been raised in the lugubrious exhibition that Lisa Phillips has organised at the Whitney Museum of American Art . . . Unfortunately, Ms Phillips proves to be a complete dupe — a sort of genteel groupie convert — of the movement she has been commissioned to explore and assess. Without critical acumen or artistic judgment, lacking even the rudiment of artistic sensibility and totally at sea about politics, she has approached her task in a state of Panglossian innocence . . . For what, after all, is the central significance of Beat culture?

There is the jeans industry, of course — the anticapitalist Beats' most significant contribution to American capitalism. There is, too, the less lucrative free-verse industry — the Beats' most conspicuous contribution to the decline of American literary standards. The Beats, to be sure, didn't quite manage to destroy American poetry, but it wasn't for lack of trying.

There is also the bad prose industry. The Beats didn't invent bad prose, but they produced an awful lot of it. And more than any other movement in American literary history, they succeeded for a while in making bad prose fashionable — or, as they say, "cool" — a feat of cultural legerdemain that has never been given the recognition it deserves.

But all of this, even the "underground" fashion statement that launched a revolution in the promotion of jeans and the advertising of men's underwear, is a mere historical footnote compared to the Beats' most fateful contribution to American life: its drug culture. Beat culture was, above all else, a drug culture, and in this respect it did indeed serve as a model of things to come.

Forget all the stuff you've heard about "religious illumination" and "beatitude". Forget all the malarkey about "searching for some kind of ecstasy, some marvellous vision of God." For the Beats, the nature of religious experience — if it could still be called that — was strictly pharmacological. Beatness was all about drugs, the abuse of which was elevated to a cultural vocation. Drugs — a veritable cornucopia of mind-altering, fantasy-inducing illegal substances — was the defining experience of the Beat Generation. It was with its celebration of drug culture that the Beats cast an enduring curse on American society.

They proselytised for drugs, they made drugs an emblem of personal and political emancipation, they promoted drugs as a symbol of spiritual redemption, they legitimised drugs as a way of life. It was the Beats who ushered in the era of the great "fix" that has so miserably disfigured American life in the last decades of the 20th century. Drugs was their "New America". Everything else in Beat culture — even its sexual pathologies — was subordinate to the central role of drugs.

Hilton Kramer reassesses the Beats for the New York Observer. The Beat poets have come under attack since William Burroughs made a commercial for Levi's jeans. Meanwhile, Hilton Kramer is not the only unlikely name in the pages of the NYO. Charles V Bagli, Matthew Flamm, Candace Bushnell, Frank Digiacomo are among the loveable characters assembled for this weekly pink paper.

Technolust

I'VE BEEN travelling for three months, and, oh god, I missed your magazine. Then the unmistakable logo caught my eye at a newsstand in the Philippines.

My neurons tingled in anticipation as I tore the plastic sleeve off to caress the smooth glossy pages. Gently. I laid the issue down on a clear spot on the bench beside me and leafed through to your aptly titled Fetish section, which filled my materialistic heart with technolust. "I need a computer!" I screamed inside, my fingers itching for the tactile ecstasy of a keyboard and trackpad. I want to get home, flip open my PowerBook, and listen to my baby hum, the RAM sizzle, the hard drive spin, and the keys go click, click, click, as I sit bathed in the pale phosphorescence of the screen in the surrounding darkness. It's hell on my retinas, but I just love that 4-in-the-morning-and-still-clocking-40-words-a-minute feeling.

Yes, everything you know about Wired is true. A letter to the seminally hip mag from Damien Fox, out of Manila, the Philippines.

Pop zoo

WE GOT to the show and there was some big fat floor manager who was getting our guitars, picking them up and just leaving them lying on the floor. I've got this 1957 Esquire guitar and I saw him barging everyone out the way with it. I told him to put [it]



Fetish . . . Wired

down. He said no so we gave him a quick little slap and told him to put it down or we'd give him a good kicking. It was all a bit passionate and people threatened him, but he saw sense and let go. It didn't really go off big style.

But as I was having him, Skin went upstairs to our dressing room. We were all sharing dressing rooms, because there was about eight bands playing there and celebrities from Italian TV. He walked in and there was Miss Italy, naked! She was there with some geezer who I suppose must have been her minder or something, and he started shouting in Italian and kind of doing an opera. I think it was a very dark opera, you know what I mean? So Skin got a full frontal of Miss Italy. We all hate him for that.

To top it all off, there were about 12 Tibetan monks there who had come over from Tibet to do some mad chanting and all that. We dedicated a song to them just for a laugh. For the rest of the evening they were giving us these strange looks because we'd said hello to them. That was quite entertaining. This all happened in about two hours. It was quite a surreal evening.

[We] went to do this radio show [in Austria], and we were all set to do our Smashie and Nicey bit. But they wanted us to act like Green Day or the Beastie Boys. But we were just talking about the tracks in our own way, and then this woman comes in and said, "You're arrogant". That was it. We just went mad and stormed out. The worst part was that we couldn't get out. We had to go back and ask them the way out.

John Power, singer with pop group Cast, explains the gruelling nature of modern celebrity to the Melody Maker.

Jackdaw wants your jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk.; fax 0171-713 4366; Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Dan Glaister

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The real price of peace

President Clinton must go for compromise

THE AMERICAN President whose election the Conservative Party so resented and tried so hard to stop presented himself at Westminster yesterday as the friend and the ally of the Conservative Government. Bill Clinton's speech to the joint Houses of Parliament was graceful, flattering and as indulgent to Britain's self-image as the staunchest Atlanticist could wish for. It pressed all the right buttons to please the British establishment. It denounced the isolationism which London perennially fears in Washington and feared particularly in Mr Clinton. It applauded the latest moves in the Northern Ireland peace process. And it extolled the Anglo-American relationship as a friendship "alone, unbroken, above all the rest, a model for the ties that should bind all democracies", words which even today have the power to make the most hardened British official go misty-eyed and tingly and the most cynical British politican walk inches taller.

Yet yesterday's rituals and ceremonies were the easy bit of Mr Clinton's visit. Today, as the caravan moves on to Belfast, things get much more sensitive. It was noticeable yesterday that the Mr Clinton who offered elegant generalities in support of the Northern Ireland peace process in his speech at Westminster was a much more relaxed politician than the Mr Clinton who briefly answered questions from the press in Downing Street earlier in the morning. Forced to choose unscripted words with care, Mr Clinton became audibly more hesitant, conscious of the extremely delicate path which he must pick on this complex issue. There will be more of that today at every turn. Some of the most sensitised political antennae on the planet will be trained on his every movement, gesture and word. Observers from Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic will scrutinise everything for praise and insult, real or imagined. This is not St Patrick's Day at the White House. Anything but. It will be a genuine test of Mr Clinton's role and relevance in the Irish process.

It is indisputable that Mr Clinton wishes to play such a role. That is why he is the first American President to make the effort to go to Belfast. It is greatly to his credit that he wishes to do this, and suspicious Ulster opinion should not underestimate the seriousness which this brief visit embodies. But it is terribly important in every way that Mr Clinton does not muff his moment. It won't be enough today to bless the peacemakers, even though they deserve it. Nor will it be enough to be even-handed to all parties, though that is important too in its way. What Mr Clinton must do is to use his influence for good with the Irish protagonist who most depends upon his favour. Mr Clinton has to help Sinn Fein and the IRA to make the necessary compromises which alone will assure mistrustful opinion that Irish republicanism has settled, if indeed it has, for the politics of compromise. The president will have failed if he even appears not to recognise that this is now the key to all future progress.

John Major was right to remind the Commons yesterday that this all began in 1993 with an Anglo-Irish declaration in favour of a permanent end to paramilitary violence. There has been a danger recently that the legitimacy of this agreed position has been eroded by an ambiguous desire for "progress" at whatever price. The British government has been too cautious about possible ways forward since the ceasefires. But the two governments were always right to place a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods at the heart of the new era. It is what the people want. Today Mr Clinton must show by words and deeds that he absolutely understands this fundamental anxiety.



We're all welfare reformers now

But what happens if there are no jobs to price people into?

SO DID the One Nation Tories win? Kenneth Clarke laid heavy emphasis on his budget being "realistic but socially responsible". There was much reciting of the new mantra: moving from welfare to work. All three main parties now chant the same theme. Good for them. It is an urgent objective. We do need to reduce dependency. We should be building better bridges between welfare and work as Scandinavia has done. But the danger of the current consensus on language (welfare designed for "a hand up — rather than a hand out") is the degree to which it hides the differences in objectives. One cause of the confusion is the reluctance of any of the political parties to be more specific about their poverty strategies.

Take Tuesday's budget. As we noted yesterday, it did little to help the poor. There was no help for children. Inequality, which has widened to an unacceptable level, will be even wider now. But how well did the budget conform to the Chancellor's mantra? The current obscure philosophy allowed some howling contradictions to get through. Freezing one parent benefit may please the far right, but it contradicts welfare-to-work principles because this is one benefit which can be carried over from unemployment to work. Similarly, the new restrictions on housing benefit for under 25-year-olds will only deter unemployed young people from the risk of leaving home to take up a job in another town. Equally, savage new cuts to an already heavily-shrunken housing budget means there will be even fewer affordable homes in towns where jobs are available for unemployed people ready to migrate.

There is a more fundamental problem which both Tories and Labour will have to resolve. Last year the Chancellor stole several ideas from Labour's Borrie Commission in a commendable move to improve the bridge between welfare and work. These included incentives to employers to take on long-term unemployed people and new in-work benefits to persuade the unemployed to take up work. Family credit, designed to help children in low-paid families, is now becoming available to childless couples and single people in pilot areas. Ministers are right to pursue such pilots but need to be honest about their implications. One reason why this week's budget has given the low paid so little is because of in-work benefits. For example a family of four with an income of £8,000 theoretically gained £2.60 a week in tax cuts on Tuesday, but the real net gain after the corresponding deduction of their in-work benefits (family credit, housing benefit, council tax benefit) could be a mere 10p. There are other muddles. Both Labour and Conservatives are ready to reduce benefits for people who refuse training or low-paid work. This is right in principle but how far should it go? It works in Scandinavia because the unemployed are offered genuine opportunities. Would they be offered them here? Precise answers please.

A fourth way from Mr Forsyth

Forget the content: just watch the Scottish cards being shaken

SCOTLAND'S national day has rarely attracted as much political activity. Yesterday the Scottish Secretary Michael Forsyth announced a series of procedural changes in the way that Scottish legislation is considered at Westminster. Today he delivers a keynote statement on Scottish government at Strathclyde University. And Labour has also chosen St Andrew's Day to launch its own plans for the devolved assembly favoured by the majority of Scottish voters. Who says Ulster is getting all the attention?

Mr Forsyth's initiative is by far the most interesting, though it is not necessarily the most substantial. He plans to give the Scottish Grand Committee in the House of Commons extra powers in the passage of Scottish bills and to give it a higher profile by making senior ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, come and address it north of the border from time to time. Labour denounced the moves yesterday with predictable contempt.

Mr Forsyth may deny it, but his moves are an implicit recognition that the Conservative position on Scotland has become unsustainable. The Tories have long opposed devolution, but parts of the party have recently become too zealously unionist for the Tories' electoral good. Mr Forsyth, who has emerged as a more resourceful Scottish Secretary than some expected, is trying to set out a fourth way — not the status quo, not devolution and not independence — in order to secure the Conservative base in Scotland. Many will think that this fourth way is not only unpopular but a phoney, and that it will prove as irrelevant as Labour claimed yesterday. Probably so. But it is an initiative nonetheless, and even as it fails to persuade it may also shake up the Scottish cards more interestingly than some people think.

Letters to the Editor

A penny for your Budget thoughts

ON Budget Day Virginia Bottomley announced the largest ever cut to the arts in England — £5 million or £10 million in real terms. Not content with its £480 million tax windfall from the Lottery, the Treasury has clawed back £30 million from the "good causes". This breaks the Prime Minister's explicit promise that Lottery proceeds would help bring a new activity to every area and that the Government would not just cut back its own spending.

Lottery money for the arts goes to builders and architects, not to artists and the audience. How can the arts reach every area if the people of Basingstoke, Southport, Crewe, Swindon and every other city visited by touring companies find that next year they will have no chance to enjoy plays, concerts or opera?

Theatres, orchestras and dance companies could be the first casualties. In those that survive, more jobs will be lost, ticket prices will soar and the arts will be reduced to the safe and unadventurous. MPs should be reminded that empty theatres and concert halls in marginal constituencies are no way to create a feel-good factor.
Jennifer Edwards.
Director, National
Campaign for the Arts,
Francis House, Francis Street,
London SW1P 1DE.

THE Chancellor has claimed repeatedly that he delivered a "£9 a week Budget" (Tax trimmer Clarke plays safe, November 29). He claims that next year an average family, on gross earnings of £20,659.60, will be better off by £9 a week. The Chancellor fails to point out, however, that the £9 is mainly accounted for by an assumption that next year real earnings will grow by 1.75 per cent. Hence £6.56 of his projected higher living standards comes purely from projected earnings growth. The real tax change as a direct result of the Budget amounts to only a quarter of his £9: another case of the Conservatives preferring rosy forecasts to grim reality. A typical family is now still £670 a year worse off than at the last election.
Andrew Smith MP.
Shadow Chief Secretary
to the Treasury.
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

YET again, it seems, young people find themselves at the bottom of a "two-tier" benefits system. Not only do we expect them to live on less income support, we now expect under-25s to survive on less housing benefit. The proposals to limit benefit to the cost of shared accommodation assume that cheap shared accommodation, of a decent standard, is readily available. How do the young unemployed survive if it is not? Besides, young people are particularly keen to have their own space — according to those interviewed by the University of Central England for the YMCA earlier this year.

We find from our work that putting young people into independent flats and bedsits teaches them to cope, to become confident, independent adults. Surely these are the attributes the Government is eager to foster? Or is this just another cyncial way of hitting hardest the group who are least likely to use their vote in the next election?
Nicholas Nightingale.
National Secretary,
YMCA,
640 Forest Road,
London E17 3DZ.

KENNETH Clarke in his Budget statement made much of Private Finance Initiatives taking the strain from the Exchequer to benefit the taxpayer. But this supposed innovation has been at the core of Tory government policy from the start.

Private capital will only be attracted to public sevices if there is a guaranteed profit stream. This has to be provided by the taxpayer, in the case of privatised prisons and government agencies, B&B housing, and privately financed NHS hospitals. In the case of privatised utilities, it has to come from the user. The various operations have still to be paid for either through taxes or through increased service charges. But in addition, the user has to fund the profits which make the operations worthwhile to the entrepreneur. The myth that the user/taxpayer will benefit from business acumen and efficiency is truly fanciful. Efficiency is measured purely in shareholder terms. Business acumen is largely a matter of cost-cutting.
Ralph Herdan.
4 Hillside View,
New Mills, Stockport,
Cheshire SK12 3DF.

Ammunition for Irish talks

TWO of your correspondents yesterday (Letters, November 29) took as the basis of their argument the assumption that British imperialism is the basis for the existence of Northern Ireland.

A closer look at the politics at the time of the separation of Ireland will show that the climate was dominated by the philosophy of self-determination, following the first world war.

The British no longer fought to retain Ireland. Indeed, the Conservative Party, which before the war had been prepared to support the breaking of the law in support of the Union, was now ready to accept a Republic of Ireland. But this principle also extended to the majority in the six counties who also wanted the right of self-determination, and that was to remain as part of the UK.

It is easy to dislike the Protestant/Unionist politics, stuck as they are in what appears to be bigotry and negativity, but that is no reason to disregard their rights.

A solution will come from a wider acceptance of diverse opinions rather than an imperialist/freedom-fighter analysis that owes more to student politics of the sixties than a proper analysis of the history and the current situation.
Tim McKane.
6 Willesden Park,
Belfast BT9 5GX.

THE British government is not asking for a unilateral "surrender of arms" by the IRA with the implication of some triumphalist victory. It is asking that both Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries make a start on the decommissioning process before engaging in talks, as a demonstration of good faith that they are prepared to take the path of democracy.

Michael Rustin appears to assume that the talks will lead to a "successful conclusion" but it should be obvious to him that this also has a "contradictory definition": for the IRA it means a united Ireland, and for the Loyalists, remaining in the UK.

The crucial question to Rustin and that section of the left he represents is this: does he reserve the right of the IRA to resort to arms if they fail to achieve a united Ireland through democratic means because they are engaged in an "anti-imperialist struggle?"
Simon Partridge.
37 Beresford Road,
London N2 8AT.

On the Home Secretary . . .

I AM serving an 18-month prison sentence. I write about the new drug tests that have started in all British prisons, which involves taking urine from each inmate.

The result is that most people who used to take just cannabis when bored are now taking heroin. The urine samples are the reason for this: opiates stay in your system for only up to 48 hours, whereas cannabis is there for up to 28 days. So many people are turning to heroin instead of taking the risk of losing remission for cannabis.

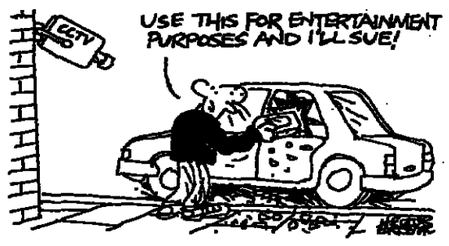
This brainless Home Secretary thinks he is stamping out drugs in prison but he is only making a far greater problem. You will now have a greater number of heroin addicts getting out of prison turning to crime to feed their habit.
P Gladstone.
HM Prison Everthorpe,
Brough,
North Humberside HU15 1RB.

YOU claimed (Diary, November 28) that Michael Howard was reluctant to produce his passport in Brussels when checking in to leave after the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting last week. Nothing of the kind happened as I know because, as his Private Secretary, I was with the Home Secretary the entire time and — as always — he produced his passport in entirely the normal way.
Katharine Bramwell.
Home Office,
Queen Anne's Gate,
London SW1H 9AT.

AS A mere amateur musician who enjoys the likes of Harrison Birtwistle, may I take issue with Eric Millwards' conclusion that such music is "pure cacophony" (Letters, November 29).

"Tunes" (ie diatomic melody) have only been around for a few hundred years, based on the very narrow geographical and cultural area of central Europe. To insist on "tunes" at all times is to ignore vast tracts of musical life from Gaelic psalm-singing to African drumming.

Birtwistle's music is highly structured, taking in influences from world culture, from ritualism, theatre, painting. The new always unsettles preconceptions.
Val Mainwood.
62 Belle Vue Road, Wivenhoe,
Colchester CO7 9LD.



Who watches the watchers?

IF ANYONE has been "caught in the act" it is the Government for having no legislation in force to control the activities of security companies — whom the police admit contain ex-criminals — who install and operate security and surveillance systems (Closed circuit video maker faces inquiry, November 28). As these firms are driven by the profit motive, it is not surprising that their visual products can be made available for commercial use.

But who is watching the watchers? We need to know who these people are; who they are accountable to; whether they are qualified to judge the legality of any footage viewed; who decides on the disposal or destination of the material. And should they retain the copyright in *any* material they obtain?
Name and address supplied.

Conflicting views from abroad

THANK you for your excellent report (Kashmiri hostage hide-and-seek, November 25) about what is going on in Indian-held Kashmir, particularly the line: "What is so extraordinary about the hostages' perambulations around Anantnag is that south Kashmir ... is now firmly in the control of Indian security forces". Absolutely right.

How the thugs who have taken the tourists hostage can send fax after fax to the media both in Srinagar and Delhi would be proof enough that India itself is involved in the kidnapping to discredit the freedom movement in Kashmir. The Indians, after all, have close to 650,000 troops in the valley.
Kamran Shafi.
Minister, Information
Division, High Commission
for Pakistan,
36 Lowndes Square,
London SW1X 9JN.

MOST Nigerians are saddened by the deaths of Ken Saro-Wiwa and nine other Ogoni people. However, the current campaign to impose oil sanctions against our country is opposed by the vast majority of us at home and abroad.

The economic disaster that will follow is not going to affect the military leaders or the wealthy classes. The suffering and the hunger will only make even worse the plight of ordinary Nigerians. President Nelson Mandela, who is calling for the sanctions, did not seem to have any problems in accepting help from the predecessors of the present regime in Nigeria in the fight against apartheid. They too were military governments.

General Abacha was not elected, but then neither was General Gowon, who received support from Britain, Russia and America to put down the Biafran uprising between 1966 and 1970. General Abacha has as much right to put down rebellion in Ogoniland as Gowon had to act in Biafra.

As for Mashood Abiola's claim to the presidency of Nigeria, most Nigerians want to know how he acquired his millions during the era of the military regimes he now wishes to replace. His close association with a succession of military regimes makes his claim to be the saviour of democracy in Nigeria sound very hollow indeed.
A K Imo.
Neville Road,
London E6 1.

Please include a full postal address, even on e-mailed letters, and a daytime telephone number. We may edit letters for clarity and concision. We regret we cannot acknowledge those we do not use.

Look, women on the letters page

THE reason there are few women correspondents to this page (Letters, November 27) is as follows:
- They are working hard at their careers during the day.
- They come home to children and a husband, to cooking and cleaning etc.
- They are lucky if they get to read the Guardian, let alone write a letter.

Pat Bance.
7 Charlesworth Gardens,
Waterlooville,
Hants.

IT seems (Teenage magazine remains defiant after giving readers tips on oral sex, November 28) that a double standard is at work.

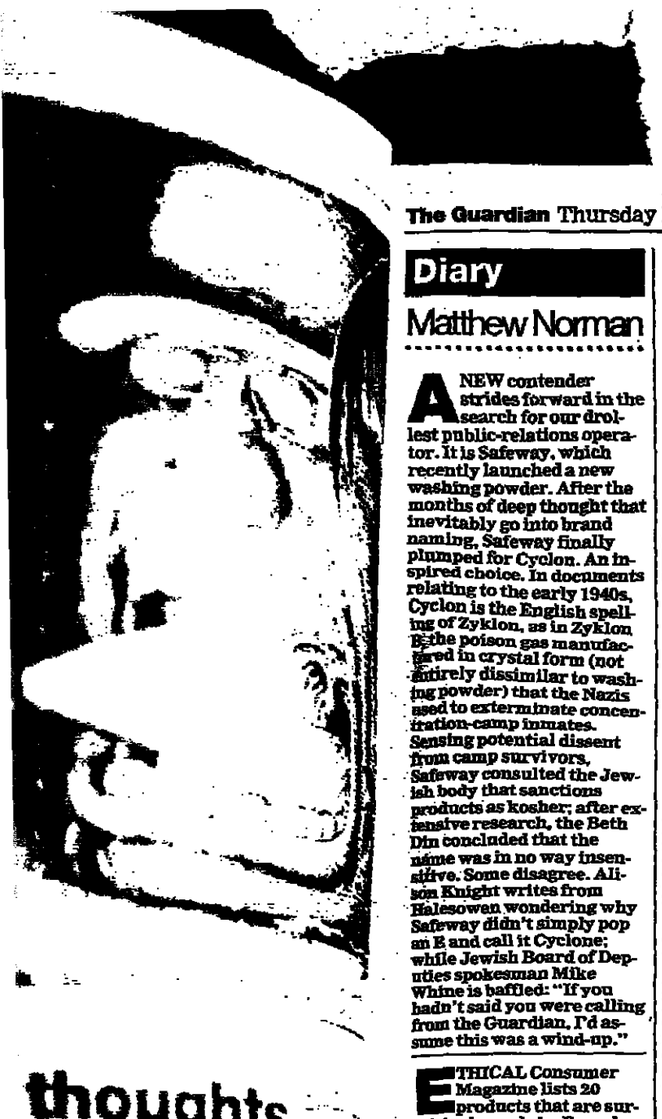
It appears acceptable to tell children of 10 how babies are made, but mentioning oral sex is taboo. Yet surely it makes sense to get them used to the idea that, when they are old enough to have sex, there are activities which won't lead to unwanted pregnancies?
Katherine A Gilchrist.
Whitstable Road,
Canterbury,
Kent CT2 8EB.

A Country Diary

HIGHLANDS: Last Saturday I went to the annual general meeting of the Highland Biological Recording Group where speakers talked about the wildlife surveys carried out in 1995 and the plans for the surveys next year. Since we formed the group in 1987 the species chosen for the surveys have varied and included adders, mountain hares, pine martens, giant hogweed and freshwater mussels. In most cases the species have been chosen because they are easy to identify so that virtually anyone can take part and send in records. This year the surveys were of burnet moths, ox-eye daisy, juniper galls, butterflies and spangle galls and, as usual, the number of records varied considerably. The number of butterfly records — around 1,000 for the year — reflects the rapidly growing interest in this group, whose declining numbers are an indication of our mismanagement of the countryside. Some surveys aim to indicate changes from previous national surveys whilst others set a baseline for future surveys to once again indicate changes. One of the earliest surveys which I co-ordinated was on speckled wood and orange tip butterflies and this was very successful partly because we involved schools that were very enthusiastic. In contrast, the poorest response of all the surveys was another one I did which was of wild goats where the response was almost nil. At the AGM the group approved next year's surveys covering wasps, drinker moth, jellyfish, weasel and stoat and lungwort. I may well have had the first stoat record because, on Sunday morning near the house, I saw a stoat feeding on a dead rabbit at the roadside. The fact that the stoat was still in its brown summer coat reminded me that, in the Highlands if the winter is relatively mild, stoats do not change into the white ermine coat. It was unclear whether the rabbit had been killed by the stoat or whether it was a road casualty.

RAY COLLIER

مكتبة من الأصل



thoughts

K

Diary

Matthew Norman

A NEW contender strides forward in the search for our droll-lest public-relations operator. It is Safeway, which recently launched a new washing powder. After the months of deep thought that inevitably go into brand naming, Safeway finally plumped for Cyclon. An inspired choice. In documents relating to the early 1940s, Cyclon is the English spelling of Zyklon, as in Zyklon B, the poison gas manufactured in crystal form (not entirely dissimilar to washing powder) that the Nazis used to exterminate concentration-camp inmates. Sensing potential dissent from camp survivors, Safeway consulted the Jewish body that sanctions products as kosher; after extensive research, the Beth Din concluded that the name was in no way insensitive. Some disagree. Alison Knight writes from Halesowen wondering why Safeway didn't simply pop an E and call it Cyclone; while Jewish Board of Deputies spokesman Mike Whine is baffled: "If you hadn't said you were calling from the Guardian, I'd assume this was a wind-up."

ETHICAL Consumer Magazine lists 20 products that are surprisingly made by French companies, for those keen to boycott the correct groceries. Although Lea and Perrins Worcestershire Sauce, Jacob's Crackers and Jameson's Irish Whiskey are among them, the one truly agonising sacrifice for the would-be boycotter will be that paradigm of the Gallic culinary art, Daddies brown sauce.

CONSISTENCY is the hallmark of the Daily Mail's success as guardian of family values, as its Budget coverage illustrated yesterday morning. On page 6, for example, Margaret Stone called the financial benefits for married couples "a welcome start to a policy which sets out to reward family values". On page 8, meanwhile, that fearsome crusader for moral uprightness, William Oddie, described the identical benefit as "so tiny, one is tempted to think it is a deliberate insult". Stirring as this is, on reflection I think I liked Mr Oddie better when he was in The Goodies.

MY friend Ronnie Biggs has failed in an attempt to make his peace with British Rail. When the landlord of a Darlington pub named after Buster Edwards wrote to him in Brazil, Ronnie sent back a cheque made out to BR in the sum of £2,631,784 — the Great Train Robbers' haul in 1963. "Would you please see that this cheque reaches BR," he wrote, "and ask them to let bygones be bygones?" And who, to quote Boris the Jackal Johnson, could say fairer than that? Oddly, however, British Rail has rejected the olive branch, describing the reparation as "in extremely bad taste". The cheque will now be framed and hung behind the bar at Buster's, near Darlington station.

FOLLOWING my friend Niall Ferguson's intriguing, if techically flawed, prediction that Gordon Brown would reply to the Budget on Tuesday rather than Mr Tony Blair, there is further evidence that the prophetic powers of Independent writers are on the wane. On yesterday's front page, David Lister reported how Damien Hirst won the Turner Prize "to the sound of animal-rights protesters shouting abuse at him". There was, in fact, no shouting, quite possibly because not a single animal-rights protester turned up. Mr Lister, who had prepared his opening in advance, rang in to confess his oracular failure. . . and the same paragraph survived to later editions. As for the rumour that David Montgomery is considering relocating the paper to Delphi, this is unconfirmed.

THE Fabian Society has scored a fund-raising triumph. Its annual report reveals that the Development Appeal has raised the resounding sum of £15,545. As for the Development Appeal Costs, these were a paltry £16,673. The Diary take its hat off to the Fabians.





No green-tinted spectacles now

Commentary

Hugo Young

WHATEVER the Major-Bruton deal does for Ireland, it marks a climax for the White House. It puts the President on the spot, in a way he now seems pleased to accept. It changes the angle of pressure he will exert: crudely put, from pressure on the British Government to pressure on Sinn Fein/IRA. It begins to turn a dismal segment of history round. One thing the British and Americans share, Mr Clinton said in yesterday's compelling speech to Parliament — the address of someone sounding, as he seldom does, like a statesman — is that "we have no dark motives in our dealings with other nations". Until recently, this would have been an inexact account of Washington's attitude to Ireland.

For three years, the White House tilt has been green. Green for Ireland, and green for amazingly naive. The key officials thought they were dealing with a colonialist situation, and cast Gerry Adams as a Nelson Mandela for the northern hemisphere. If I hadn't heard this direct from a very senior official, I would find it hard to believe, even though I know Washington quite well. But such soft-headed piety informed all the key decisions, especially those involving Mr Adams. In 1993, he was granted a US visa despite scorning the pre-conditions firmly laid down, which were to renounce violence and support the Downing St Declaration, the basis of all that has followed. Last March, Adams was received at the White House in near-heroic mode, although he declined either before or after the visit to make a concession on violence or the de-commissioning of arms.

In taking this position, the Clinton people were driven not only by ignorant sentiment but, of course, by domestic politics. The Irish vote matters, especially to a Democrat in trouble, and Irish-Americans are blind to Irish realities. There was a time when this visit was scheduled to bring a grand political climacteric, with bear-hugs all round under Clinton's aegis in the heart of Belfast.

For many weeks, it has been well understood that this would be impossible. The visit would be at best a distant benediction on unfinished business, at worst a nullity with only a Christmas tree to show for it. The shift of perspective began in late September, when Nancy Soderberg, the lead White House official on Ireland, paid an unpublicised visit to London, followed shortly by her boss, Tony Lake, head of the National Security Council. Between them, Lake and Ms Soderberg were exposed to more British and Unionist opinion than Washington had ever listened to before. An official close to their talks said they had their eyes opened to the political reality of Ulster Unionism under its new and more formidable leader, David Trimble. It was a triumph, in particular, for the American embassy in London, whose analyses were customarily regarded as a case of ambassadors going native, mere mouthpieces for British prejudice.

The deal prompted by Clinton's visit involves a concession by John Major but puts pressure on Gerry Adams. Major has agreed to a form of all-party talking, without a smell of the prior de-commissioning of weapons. But by doing it now, he invites Clinton to put the squeeze on the man who's the nearest thing to Washington's client rather than listen to his bleatings about London's destructive inertia. Let's hope he does so. The next move is certainly up to Sinn Fein, in this long process for which the Major-Bruton pact has bought the priceless commodity of time. Internationalising the arms issue is the best way of releasing it from sterilities in which it has been locked for more than a year. But in the end, it cannot replace the choices that have to be made by the parties to the argument.

As the months have passed, conventional wisdom has tended to put Britain in the dock for the failure to build on the 1994 cease-fire. Mr Major is depicted as a man who, having started the process, has welshed on the deal. The Prime Minister, it's often said, is some kind of phony, changing his ground, inserting new conditions, prevaricating and playing hard to get. And there've certainly been some shifts of emphasis. The demand on arms was originally not as emphatic as it became. So yes, Major has played politics — as he's been obliged to by the smallness of

> US officials cast Gerry Adams as a Nelson Mandela for the northern hemisphere

his parliamentary majority and his vulnerability to Unionist opinion. Forget the Paisleyites: keeping the Ulster Unionists on board is more than academic deferral to their local importance.

I prefer to think that Major has got his timing right. The unscrambling of 25 years' bloody disaster is bound to take a very long time. The weight of culture and history that has to be overcome, if a lasting peace is to be made, ordains an attention-span of matching solemnity, which survives all manner of delays and cogitations and threats and even outright violations. Any leader who gets involved in re-ordering this history, and comes face-to-face with Ireland's endless fascination with obstructive minutiae, has to be ready for the long haul. Mr Blair needs to be schooling himself for it as well, for what Major has started Major will not live to finish. Meanwhile, to institute a new twin-track process, with another deadline, is the right way to make use of time's ally: the steady experience of peace which makes it ever less acceptable to be the party responsible for destroying it.

In the next batch of time, between now and the end of February, the biggest service the international commission can perform is to find a way of indicating to Sinn Fein/IRA that its stance on arms is unacceptable. The IRA's adamant rejection of even token decommissioning has hitherto prevailed. Recited like a mantra, it has acquired for many of its intended audience, including a good few readers of the Guardian, axiomatic reality. But if continued in perpetuity, it will show only that Sinn Fein is not truly interested in a settlement. Elements of Sinn Fein certainly are not. They want only total victory. But that's not the transaction behind which the international community is being mobilised. President Clinton to the fore. Now that Major has made his move, and been denounced by most Unionists for nothing worse than a fudge, it's plain enough where the next obligation lies.

The Clinton visits, London yesterday and Belfast today, may serve the purpose of instruction in that matter. If so, they will be worth a lot more than when the green lobby dreamed them up.

Playing happy families on the streets



Natasha Walter

ONE MINUTE Chancellor Clarke was freezing lone parents' benefit; the next he was limiting housing benefit for unemployed young people. All fine right-wing targets which helped to pay for the tax cuts. The message is clear: the Government intends to squeeze the most stigmatised members of society — single mothers, the undeserving poor — in favour of those whom it hopes and prays may vote Conservative.

And then, in passing, there was a reminder of another part of that cool-headed, or cold-hearted, strategy. Mr Clarke reminded us that the Social Security Secretary would be announcing measures to cut the benefits of "people who apply for asylum on arrival in the country".

The day before the Budget, the Daily Mail gleefully splashed the tale of a ring of fraudulent asylum-seekers who were netting thousands of pounds in benefits. Racism and economic insecurity intertwine; and the handful of quickwitted fraudsters that can be found is allowed to stand in for all the isolated, desperate victims of war and torture that beg for refuge. You'll remember that when the National Lottery Charities Board gave 1 per cent of its first round of grants to refugee groups, the Sun ran an outraged headline, "Mad Somalians get £183,000", and the Star had a cartoon showing hordes of black immigrants queueing up for handouts at Heathrow.

One family, let's call them Family A, who may be affected by the new benefit regulations, arrived in Britain from Zaire in 1993. They were deeply traumatised by their experience of war and owned nothing but the clothes they stood up in. They have three children under five, and after finding unfurnished accommodation in Dagenham, they took a loan from the Social Fund to buy essentials. They still lack adequate bedding and household equipment; the father is in and out of psychiatric hospital. And they receive benefits of all of £90 for five people, from which they pay for gas and heating as well as Social Fund repayments, food and clothing. They are already poor, they are already miserable, they are already isolated. Hey, scroungers!

You'll be glad to hear that the present government isn't having any of it. From January most asylum-seekers will be denied all benefit — no housing benefit, no income support, no disability allowance. As Family Service Units, a charity that works with disadvantaged families, has said: "We find it difficult to believe that this provision could be allowed to become law: its logical conclusion is that people will be forced to live on the streets and starve."

Er — yes. So how many people will be added to this new beggar class, Britain's under-the-underclass? The new regulations affect all those who have applied for asylum after entering Britain, or who are appealing against a negative decision on their case. The Refugee Council has estimated that about 8,000 people will immediately be denied all benefits, of whom over 1,000 will be children. And about 50,000 will be affected over the course of one year. So tens of thousands of people will be pushed into destitution, forced to rely on soup-kitchens, if they can find such a thing, and handouts.

In Italy, the only EU country that currently denies asylum-seekers benefits, destitute adults and children live in tents and shacks on the outskirts of cities. As from January, you will not be able to ignore those men and women who give you hand-written bits of cardboard in Britain's city centres, spelling out that they are homeless, hungry and refugees. One of them might be from Family A; or they might be from Family M, who came to Britain from the Ivory Coast in 1994. Three children under 12 live with their two parents; their father was an opposition activist and after the security forces killed his brother, he fled for his life. But because his application was made after entering Britain, they will be denied all benefits.

GIVEN that none of them speaks much English, work isn't yet on the cards. Their application for asylum may or may not be accepted, justly or unjustly; but in the meantime do we want them to be punished for trying to keep a life together for their children?

The Government may find that this new bid for popularity will backfire. Anyone who vaguely doubts that refugees are opportunists in search of a soft touch will have those doubts constantly inflamed by the sight of real hardship. And the financial savings will be tiny, adding up to just one quarter of 1 per cent of the social-security budget.

So they will probably be far outweighed by, say, the need for local authorities to take more children into care because their families can't provide for them, or, as the British Medical Association has predicted, a rise in the diseases of stark poverty, such as tuberculosis. For thousands of people in Britain, playing the race card isn't going to be much of a game.



An £800m riddle

Gillian Shephard claimed on Tuesday that the Budget proved 'that education is at the top of our priorities'. We invited her to justify this. Below, Education Editor **John Carvel** is not entirely convinced

SCHOOLS throughout the country await an important announcement today: John Gummer will set out the Government's plans for local authority funding next year. The Chancellor announced on Tuesday an extra £878 million in funding for schools. Most of it — £774 million — will be channelled though local education authorities. They will get a 4.5 per cent increase in their recurrent funding, and an extra £41 million for capital spending on schools. So schools should be able to fund all next year's pressures.

The Prime Minister has made it quite clear that education is at the top of our priorities. We have fulfilled that pledge. Local authorities must now demonstrate a similar commitment by putting the money into front-line services in schools. If they do not, parents and governors should, and will, call their local authorities to account. But more money is not, in itself, the solution. What matters most is the *way* in which the money is used. Two examples prove the point.

Berkshire, near the top of the performance tables with over 48 per cent of its students achieving five or more good GCSE passes, has some of the largest classes in England. But, at the other end of the spectrum, at Hackney Downs School, spending per pupil this year is £6,489, almost three times the national average, and the pupil teacher ratio is eight to one. Yet the education offered at the school is so bad I have decided to close it. It costs as much to teach badly as it does to teach well.

The overall framework for raising standards and addressing any weaknesses in the system is already in place. School and college performance tables play a crucial role in the battle to drive up standards. Parents and pupils can now make informed choices of school or college, based on the facts; that encourages healthy competition, which in turn drives up standards. Reliable measures of added value will be published alongside performance tables if such clear measures can be established. These must, however, be simple to collect, not overburden schools, and be based firmly on the differences in pupils' actual achievements as measured by national assessments and examinations.

The inspection of every school over a four-year cycle gives us — for the first time — a complete picture of how our schools are performing. The Chief Inspector of Schools has reported that the teaching quality in 30-30 per cent of lessons was unsatisfactory. Some teachers have an inadequate grasp of the National Curriculum. I have therefore recently approved wide-ranging improvements in teacher training.

But in some schools the problems are worse and demand tougher solutions. Inspectors have pinpointed over 100 schools which fail to provide their pupils with an acceptable standard of education. I have set strict deadlines for those schools and their local authorities to present recovery plans. If they prove ineffective I can, and will, use my power to place such schools under the management of an education association appointed by the Government. And I will not shirk from closing schools if it is clear that they cannot be turned around and improved. This is what I have just done at Hackney Downs.

We are developing, jointly with schools, new benchmarking projects which will enable headteachers and governors to share good practice in financial management, and in targeting resources where they can do most to raise standards. Other measures — testing and assessment at 7, 11 and 14, the review of teacher training, the new headteacher qualification — will all contribute to higher standards.

The broad framework for raising standards in education is already working. On top of it we are now putting in place building blocks which will ensure that the education pupils receive provides the type of workforce that a dynamic and thriving economy requires.

I announced on Budget Day a new initiative to raise standards of literacy and numeracy in primary schools. We plan to work with Ofsted — the independent schools inspectorate — to establish a network of literacy and numeracy centres, based in local education authorities. These centres will draw on evidence from inspection and research to spread good practice between local schools to improve the teaching and learning of reading, writing and the use of numbers. I have also initiated the Better English Campaign. This will aim to ensure that young people learn how to communicate effectively in English — also essential for employment.

Sir Ron Dearing is now revising the whole area of qualifications for 16- to 19-year-olds. This includes looking at how the core skills of communication, numeracy, IT, problem-solving and teamworking can be developed in qualifications for the age group. This will help ensure that school-leavers have more relevant skills and are more employable.

Finally, following the merger of the former Departments for Education and Employment, the Training and Enterprise Councils have a more important role to play in promoting high-quality training for those who have left school. We are moving to an era where the artificial divide between school and work will no longer matter in any significant sense. We are moving to a period of lifelong learning in which we are seeking to raise standards at all stages.

Wherever I talk to employers they make it crystal clear to me what they want and need: an adaptable workforce capable of performing the core skills, motivated to work hard and with a solid educational foundation beneath them on which they can build further.

Our education reforms have provided the basis for producing such a workforce. This week's Budget has provided the money for schools and the incentive to raise education standards still higher.

The Government has kept its pledge to increase funding for schools. We have made available the resources, set out the standards which we expect schools to meet and the means to help them achieve them. The new money must go to schools themselves so that it reaches each and every pupil. The teachers' pay settlement will need to be at a clearly affordable level since every percentage point on pay next year will mean less money for new teachers, books and equipment.

We have given local authorities the money. Schools have the tools. They know what is needed. I am sure they will deliver.

The Rt Hon Gillian Shephard is Secretary of State for Education and Employment

Read John Gummer's lips today

GILLIAN SHEPHARD should not be surprised that teachers, governors and councillors have yet to be persuaded the Budget is such good news for schools.

The press release from her education department was absolutely clear cut. Education spending over the coming year would show a 1 per cent increase in real terms after a 5 per cent rise over the previous 12 months. "This settlement recognises the key part played by education in improving our competitiveness as a nation," she said. But that was the statement Mrs Shephard made exactly a year ago on November 29, 1994. By the spring, the parents of middle Britain had taken to the streets in a rare display of outrage, to march against the cuts in school budgets which have since caused about 10,000 teacher redundancies.

Mrs Shephard's political imperative now is to prove to us that she is not up to the same trick again. Her preparatory spin-doctoring was effective. Towards the end of the public-spending round she let it be known that she was putting up a tough fight against the Treasury. John Major gave her unusually strong support in his speech to the Conservative Party conference, advising everyone not to mess with Gill. It was confidently reported that she was fighting for an extra £800 million for the schools — and then that she had won the £800 million.

That indeed is close enough to the £878 million for schools announced by the Chancellor on Tuesday. As Mrs Shephard says above, £774 million of this will be channelled towards local education authorities in England, with a strong exhortation that it be spent on front-line services in the classroom. The problem is that the increase does not relate to what the councils are actually spending this year.

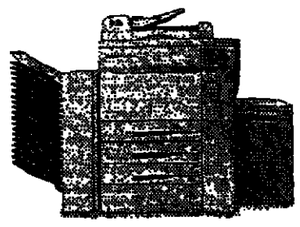
The Government said they ought to spend £17,204 million to provide a standard level of service in 1995/6. It now says they ought to spend £17,978 in 1996/7 — an increase of £774 million.

But the councils are already spending £18,076 million this year. Unless they continue to "overspend" at the same rate as before, the extra funding will be lost. That is why Mrs Shephard's reference to John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, is so important.

The councils fear he will announce today a relaxation of capping which might theoretically allow them to increase schools' budgets to match inflation and the teachers' forthcoming pay award. In practice, they could not afford to do so without swingeing increases in the council tax. Since hardly any education authorities are left in Conservative control, ministers would then be able to make political capital from an attack on local government profligacy.

These are the suspicions and Mrs Shephard has used remarkably few of the words available to her here to allay them. If she is right and education has indeed come out best from the public-spending settlement this year, heaven help those who rely on the other public services.

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Home loan rates rescue

Teresa Hunter

A NUMBER of leading mortgage lenders yesterday cut the cost of mortgages after the Chancellor "abandoned" home owners in the Budget.

Britain's biggest lender, the Halifax, cut its mortgage rate by 0.25 per cent to 7.74 per cent, followed closely by the Abbey National, the Nationwide, the Northern Rock and Britannia. More cuts are expected within days.

The Halifax said it believed the housing market was poised for recovery, and cuts in its mortgage rate would boost confidence further.

But experts pointed out that lenders were forced to make a second unilateral mortgage rate cut in three months because of disastrous lending figures. Net advances look set to be the worst since 1983, reaching just £15 billion by the end of the year, compared with £40 billion at the top of the housing market boom.

Similarly, the number of transactions has plunged to a nadir at just over a million — half the level at the 1988 peak.

House prices have fallen in some areas by 25 per cent, negative equity has risen to 1.1 million and repossessions are running at 1,000 a week. So Kenneth Clarke's assurance in his Budget speech that the Government's commitment to homeowners "remains as strong as ever" has a hollow ring.

The major lenders have remained silent on the Chancellor's rejection of their pleas to cut stamp duty, or extend mortgage interest relief (MIRAS) at least for first-time buyers to inject some life into the housing market. But privately they decried as "baffling logic" his conclusion that "none of the affordable proposals would actually make any difference".

A Halifax spokesman said the Chancellor and the Treasury appear to view the housing market "as a sleeping lion and they are afraid if they prod the animal he will get up and roar. They blame the housing market for the way the economy overheated in the 1980s, but the housing market merely followed the growth in the rest of the economy."

Fears of further house price falls — more than 34 per cent after accounting for inflation — have forced lenders to cut their mortgage rate margin to its lowest level above the 6.75 per cent base rate since 1992.

But UBS housing market analyst Rob Thomas believes prices could rise by 6 per cent in 1997 and 9 per cent in 1998. He said: "This savage bear market in housing will come to an end — it is simply a question of when."

What borrowers will save per month

Lender	Rate	Loan £,000	Repayment £	Repayment Decrease £	Interest only £	Interest only Decrease £
Halifax	7.74%	30	206.45	4.07	164.48	5.32
		40	276.34	5.71	228.98	7.41
		60	429.02	9.03	357.98	11.57
		100	734.37	15.67	615.98	19.91
Abbey National	7.79%	30	207.26	3.25	165.54	4.25
	7.79%	40	283.93	4.58	230.45	5.92
	7.74%	60	435.47	7.22	357.98	9.25
	7.69%	100	737.71	12.51	612.00	15.92
Nationwide	7.65%	30	205.00	4.86	162.57	6.37
		40	277.35	6.76	226.31	8.68
		60	427.21	10.76	353.81	13.88
		100	729.38	18.73	608.81	23.88
N&P	7.79%	30	200.80	3.24	165.54	4.25
		40	277.47	4.57	230.45	5.92
		60	430.81	7.22	360.29	9.25
		100	737.49	12.54	619.95	15.92



Steady Eddie gets ready to change his cautious tune



Alex Brummer

KENNETH CLARKE did his best at post-Budget briefings to squash rampant speculation of a quickie cut in interest rates. But even as he was playing the tune of the responsible economic manager, refusing to play "fast and loose" with interest rates, the building societies were making up their collective minds.

The Halifax, the mortgage market leader with more than 2.4 million borrowers and soon to convert itself into a full-blown bank, led the way down by chopping the cost of its home loans by a quarter-point to 7.74 per cent, its second cut since September in a period in which the bank base rate has remained unchanged at 6.75 per cent.

The audacity of the Halifax, which has again made the opening move in a mortgage price-cutting war on Britain's high streets, is a good enough indication that official rates may not be far behind.

The date to watch on base rates is December 13 when the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George settles down to his monthly meeting with the Chancellor.

For much of this year Mr George's script has been extremely cautious as one would expect of a central banker.

In the early summer the Governor was still insisting in his meetings with Mr Clarke that there was a danger that inflation could swing above the central target of 2.5 per cent unless base rates were increased. Mr Clarke, relying upon his Nottingham manufacturing instincts, desisted.

By the autumn, as the pace of economic recovery slowed, the Bank began to acknowledge that the Chancellor may have been right in resisting its stern prescription and perhaps, after all, base rates were fine where they were.

As the authorities approach the next decision point — in two weeks' time — there are clear signs that the Bank's judgment is again shifting and that it may be ready to accept that rates can be trimmed.

The prudent action might be a quarter point reduction in December to be followed by further cuts in the spring if justified.

However, if there are some more sluggish economic indicators between now and then, the bolder half-point cut called for by the CBI, is almost certain barring financial accident.

Some watchers of the money markets, where banks lend each other funds, were rather confused early yesterday when the Bank put out a decisive signal that it was *not* in the mood to allow base rates to fall. However, that signal was simply to calm the feverish speculation that the Government might follow its Budget with an immediate interest rate cut.

> Signs are Bank may be ready to accept rates can be trimmed

The Bank's message was not now or this week, have patience, and it may be possible to deliver on cheaper rates.

Plainly, as far as UK economic growth is concerned, something has to happen if the Treasury forecast of a 3 per cent rise in gross domestic product in the 1996 calender year, is to be achieved.

The main influence on Mr George's interest rate judgment will always be the inflation target.

Hitting this is never a particularly accurate science in that the assumption is that policy changes now, will take two years or upwards to be fully reflected in prices. However, looking across that time horizon now the view inside the Bank is that the balance of probabilities is that the target is more in range than it was in the summer, when it was still pushing for that hike.

It used to be that the pre-eminent factor in the analysis was the money supply. Both the narrow version of the money supply M0, cash used in transactions, and its wider counterpart M4 consisting of bank and building society lending to the UK private sector have been above target ranges of late.

However, the authorities have generally played down the significance of this. Instead, they have tended to focus on a broader range of indicators.

On the surface there would appear to be one huge obstacle to an interest rate cut: the weakness of sterling and uncertain global prospects.

In the run-up to the Budget and in the first day's trading since Mr Clarke's statement sterling has been distinctly uneven: it came close to its all-time low against the currencies of the UK's major trading partners yesterday. However, there appears to be confidence that the secondary effects of sterling's depreciation are being dissipated.

Similarly, the authorities are understood to be less than concerned about the European monetary union agenda which is contributing to industrial unrest in France and uncertainty around the fringes of the exchange rate mechanism.

All this is seen as background noise which should not affect the UK's policy stance.

In fact, if the turmoil increases the pressure on the Bundesbank to lower its official rates, which have been pushing downwards as the German mark has strengthened, it could make it easier for the Governor and Chancellor to ease British rates without undermining the two point or so differential between London and Frankfurt.

Despite the worse that expected UK government borrowing needs the market in British government bonds — gilts — has a distinctly heady air. The countdown to lower base rates is underway.

Dishonesty puts higher price on principles



CAN the great British public be bought and if so how much does it cost?

As someone new to this Budget business I found the preconception shared by experts of all political hues that we can be profoundly depressing. Not only can we be bought apparently, but for as little as the cost of a couple of packets of cigarettes.

Although many opinion polls, even among Tory voters, have shown that most of us would rather see increased public spending than tax cuts, it is widely assumed that what people say to pollsters is not borne out in the polling booths at election time. This Budget then, we were told, would be the most political budget ever, a last-ditch attempt to revive the Tories.

It turns out now that there is the possibility of another last and deeper ditch and another year before an election, and that the problem with this Budget is that it was not political enough.

It was a letdown for those on the right who certainly do not believe honesty is the best policy. Clarke was "sensible" and "responsible" and there was nothing to excite or stimulate the economy or the pundits on either side very much. "2p or not 2p, that is the question," said one wag who ended up like the rest of us with only a penny for his thoughts.

As he sauntered out, Dimbleby helpfully informed us that the Chancellor likes jazz, cigars, football and doesn't care too much about his appearance.

He certainly seemed relaxed as he spoke in the House. More relaxed than John Major who kept blowing his nose and Waldegrave who looked as if he were in prayer. Perhaps he was. I tried hard to listen but found myself absent-mindedly reading the instructions for an electric toothbrush.

I perked up when we were back to the studio with Peter Snow bobbing up and down in front of a virtual graphic of BBC's Budget Town which looked like Brookside Close arranged around a pound sign. Facts and figures floated by and I duly noted them as if they might be significant. "The Chancellor sat down at 4.39pm." The calculations had already been made and if you fitted into any of the average families on show then you could see if you were slightly better off. Of course I didn't fit in. I tried to think of anyone that I knew who did but couldn't.

Still help was at hand. You could find out how the Budget affected you personally on the Internet. Snow gave the address — "lots of slashes and dots" — and Peter Jay commented disdainfully that the Tories didn't seem to realise that the recovery had ended. It was all a gamble on a sustained growth rate and a cut in interest rates.

Is that it then? Why wasn't Mystic Meg on hand if it was just another lottery? It was all good news for Scotch drinking, non-smoking, classic car owners. Great. It was I have to say also good news for road protesters — although not if they are young scrumpy drinkers — but for the rest of us? Nothing had been done about job creation, for the unemployed and for the poorest members of society for whom tax is not an issue.

Even the Conservatives were underwhelmed. I know all this is about money and information about money but money is still spoken of as an abstract. It is no wonder that so many people take no notice of all these goings on.

No one bothers to point out that the value of money itself is different if you haven't got much of it. To be £7 a week better off doesn't make a lot of difference if you already have enough to live on. Yet to someone on benefit or low wages £7 a week is an enormous sum.

On the one hand we are supposed to be excited by a penny tax cut — and yet on the other the last time most of us paid any attention to all this was during the Barings fiasco when it was dutifully explained to us that one trader can gamble away millions of pounds of profits on goods that haven't been produced yet because that is how it all works. The news that many of us would spend the little extra money we had on the lottery anyway should hardly be a great surprise.

There is another set of discussions that run parallel to the Budget which struggle to find a place at its centre. One is that men and women spend their money differently, that money for many women means more money for their children which is obviously a kind of invisible investment.

Another is that not only is the economy going through structural changes but also our system of values. The get-rich-quick values of the 1980s have been replaced by a concern with stability and security and a sense that public services are worth investing in not simply financially but also socially.

> Using a Budget to capture votes is one thing, to use it for social engineering against single mothers is repellent. Tony Blair take note

Alongside this, fewer of us are willing to see natural resources as mere capital to be exploited, a point of course that environmentalists have been making for a very long time.

Clarke, instead, used his position to fine-tune what he considers to be central to Tory thinking. While claiming not to penalise single parents he did just that. By claiming single parents are favoured over couples with children he failed to recognise the harsh economic truth that it is cheaper to live as a couple than on your own with children.

While playing to the grey vote he has ignored the appalling situation of many young people who will be trapped into further financial dependence on their families and not be able to leave home unless they become homeless.

Even though Tory backbenchers were grim this was still described as a compassionate deal. The tabloids were having none of it. No instant feel-good factor means that the Sun could proclaim "You Ken Not Be Serious."

One can instantly understand the appeal of this kind of language when one reads more thoughtful pundits like Holly Sutherland of the Microsimulation unit at Cambridge saying things like: "The accompanying chart uses data from the Microsimulation Unit's tax-benefit model, Polimod, and shows the distributional impact of the main personal tax changes, relative to an indexed base."

Maybe it's me, but on the same day as the Budget, Brian Eno, speaking as he presented the Turner Prize, made an eloquent plea for artists to engage with the public, to explain the value of what they get up to. Why shouldn't economists be prepared to do the same? For what Sutherland was actually saying was that the poorest households have not benefited at all from this Budget, whereas the rich have not benefited enough to make much difference.

One sensed the frustration watching much of the TV coverage which drove Paxman to being even more yappy than usual. "Is it not the case . . ." he sneered as he tore into the various specimens brought before him in a concerted attempt to get the juices flowing.

Thankfully, however, this year the Budget was not purely a male preserve and many female experts were wheeled in to give their analysis.

I fear though, that the whole thing passed many people by. A colleague phoned while I was watching the speech. "Oh is it today?" he said "I thought it was in March." Interest rates may be cut but the general level of disinterest and distrust remains high and the gulf between the politicians and the pollsters wide.

The gap between what is considered to be economic honesty and political honesty is still huge. Using a Budget to capture votes is one thing, to use it for social engineering against single mothers is repellent. Tony Blair take note.

Anybody who has been into a school or a hospital recently does not believe there has been huge investment in the public sector, and a few extra quid in their pockets will not convince them of that. Even if we are to accept we can be bought, all the signs are that we are not as cheap as we once were.

Charities count the cost of Clarke's tax giveaway

Ian Wylie

CHARITIES were yesterday assessing the damage of the Chancellor's income tax give-away, which will cost them £17 million a year.

The 1p reduction in the basic rate of income tax means that they will lose 4 per cent of the tax they can reclaim on donations made via deeds of covenant or the Gift Aid scheme. Donations are already substantially down this year following the launch of the National Lottery.

The tax cut will hit charities which rely on deeds of covenant to underpin sponsorship programmes and churches whose members use covenants for tithing hardest.

Last year ActionAid, one of the largest overseas aid charities, claimed £3.75 million back from the taxman on covenants from 80,000 donors. But the charity says the Chancellor's tax bonus will result in an annual loss of £150,000 — more than double its budget for emergency work in Ethopia last year.

Oxfam estimates it will lose £150,000 a year in tax reclaimed from covenants, plus another £3,000 lost through Gift Aid. Save The Children, which placed advertisements in yesterday's national newspapers condemning the tax cuts, is expecting a £50,000 drop in revenue from covenants.

A spokeswoman for the NSPCC, which stands to lose £40,000 a year, said: "If the Budget encourages people to feel good and give more to charity, fine. But we're not holding out much hope of that."

Under a deed of covenant, donors agree to make a monthly, annual or lump sum payment out of taxed income for at least four years. The Inland Revenue repays the tax to the named charity. Before the Budget, charities would have received £100 from a monthly covenant of £75 — now they will receive £98.68. The Gift Aid scheme allows charities to reclaim tax on one-off donations of £250 or more.

Charities also fear that the higher inheritance tax threshold will mean that half of the 4,600 charitable estates left each year will no longer be liable for inheritance tax.

Shock over cut in university and college funding

Donald MacLeod
Education Correspondent

UNIVERSITIES and colleges were yesterday reeling from worse than expected cuts in the small print of the Budget. Students face larger classes, fewer books, ageing equipment and shabby buildings, according to university and college heads.

The government decision to hold back student numbers until the end of the century would leave Britain trailing behind competitors in Europe, North America and Japan, said the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals.

Next year the number of full-time students funded by the Government is to be cut by 3,000.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England warned that universities face a 12 per cent cut over three years — £550 million in real terms. The scale and suddenness were likely to cause difficulties for universities, said Brian Fender, the funding council's chief executive.

Diana Warwick, chief executive of the committee, said the Government would not now reach its target of a third of young people going into higher education because ministers had failed to put a proper system of funding and student loans in place.

Participation is to be frozen at 30 per cent until 1999. "It has not reformed the funding mechanism. Finding up-to-date books and lecturers with time to listen will increasingly become a lottery for students."

Civil servants to train for change in Whitehall

Sarah Ryle and Celia Weston

UP TO 10,000 civil servants are to be retrained to overcome entrenched opposition in parts of Whitehall to private firms taking over capital projects, it was announced yesterday.

Sir Christopher Bland, chairman of the Private Finance panel which marries infrastructure projects with private money and expertise, said yesterday intransigence among civil servants had been one of the PFI's main teething problems.

He said: "This is one of the most focused Government-wide training courses in recent years. This is a critical part of our strategy in changing culture, building up the requisite levels of competence and embedding PFI in government in the medium term."

The Financial Secretary, Michael Jack, confirmed that the Government expects to meet its £5 billion target for new capital projects by the end of 1995/96 under the Private Finance Initiative, but Sir Christopher Bland said it was not easy to woo Whitehall.

Sir Christopher joined the panel a year ago and has been chairman for three months. He said: "During the time that I have been here the Treasury has moved from saying 'If we do nothing it will go away', and I think that by May 1996 they will be born-again believers."

"Some of the major departments have changed but others have not."

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on prices

City reckons upbeat growth targets can not be met unaided



Flashy . . . Labour hired an electronic billboard at Piccadilly Circus in London to press its claim that an average family is £670 worse off since the start of this Parliament
PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL MUNNE

Rate cut would square the circle

Larry Elliott checks the Chancellor's longer-term financial calculations

KENNETH Clarke has his own quirky view of Budgets. Those that look great on the day tend to lose their glitter fairly rapidly, while those that at first sight garner nothing but brickbats often turn out to be rather good.

On that basis, the long-term perspective may prove more favourable than the snap judgment — particularly as a detailed study of the Budget suggests that the Chancellor is perhaps not giving us the whole story.

The key conundrum is how Mr Clarke can reconcile his gloomy prognosis for the public finances with his panglossian view of how the economy will perform over the next 12 months.

With most independent economists ratcheting down their forecasts of growth next year to 1.75-2.25 per cent, the Chancellor breezed along on Tuesday with a prediction that gross domestic product would expand by 3 per cent in 1996.

The immediate assumption was that Mr Clarke and the Treasury forecasters had factored in cuts in interest rates over the next few months to stimulate the economy.

Not so, said the Chancellor at his post-Budget press conference yesterday. The current slowdown was merely a pause and the economy would "strengthen next year because the fundamentals were sound".

However, the pre-emptive move yesterday by some mortgage lenders to reduce the cost of home loans suggests that the financial markets are supremely confident that base rates are on the way down — notwithstanding Mr Clarke's coyness.

If the markets are correct — and they probably are — then the Government is set to reduce interest rates. As a result Mr Clarke should be expecting the economy to zip along at well over 3 per cent next year. But that would almost certainly lead to a more favourable profile for the public sector borrowing requirement than that contained in the Red Book.

Mr Clarke said on Tuesday that he expects the PSBR of £29 billion in the current 1995/6 financial year to come down to just £22.5 billion in 1996/7, a higher figure than outside economists would expect with a growth forecast of at least 3 per cent.

The key to the Treasury's assumption for the PSBR is a much gloomier outlook for tax revenues than it made at this time last year, reducing receipts by around £13 billion.

Mr Giles said that £3 billion of the shortfall could be accounted for in the tax cuts announced on Tuesday, £2.5 billion from a lower Treasury forecast for money GDP and a further £3 billion from the fact that the impact on revenues of a pick-up in growth is now thought to be smaller than imagined a year ago.

But that still leaves around £4 billion or so to be accounted for. The official Treasury line is that caution is necessary after the disappointing returns over the past year. But there are at least three other possible explanations.

The first is that Mr Clarke simply does not believe his own growth forecast, and privately feels that GDP expansion next year will be more in line with the City consensus. If growth is one percentage point lower than the Treasury is forecasting, a £22.5 billion PSBR looks far more feasible.

Second, the Chancellor may think that his growth forecast is spot on, but have some misgivings about his rosy predictions for inflation. The Red Book blithely states that the economy has enough spare capacity to accommodate growth of 3 per cent next year while keeping inflation on a downward path, but some economists have doubts.

The Treasury estimates that consumer spending will rise by 3.5 per cent next year, and if it does, retailers may start to widen profit margins by pushing up prices.

Higher inflation would almost certainly lead to squeals of protest from Mr Clarke's spending colleagues, who would be seeing their departmental budgets squeezed hard in the run-up to an election. As in previous years, Mr Clarke is forecasting a fall of 1 per cent in real (inflation-adjusted) terms in the Government's control total in 1996/7, but this is a target that is always aimed for and never met.

Assuming that spending is more likely to rise than fall just before polling day, Mr Clarke may have given himself a comfort zone of £4 billion of extra spending.

The final explanation is the most obvious. It is that the Chancellor believes his own rhetoric, is determined to keep spending under strict control and has deliberately overestimated the PSBR to allow himself the luxury of announcing a big undershoot in the PSBR next November. That would leave £4 billion to give away. Not a bad start, with an election due within six months.

Company shortfall wrecks forecasts

THE Government's financial calculations appear to have been cast awry by the failure of companies to come up with as much tax as the Treasury had expected, *writes Roger Cowe.*

The latest forecasts for the economy, published on Tuesday in the Red Book, show that £145 billion is expected in 1996/7 from income tax, corporation tax and VAT — £6 billion less than the Treasury forecast in last year's Red Book.

It accounts for the bulk of the difference between last year's forecasts for government borrowing and the figures announced by Kenneth Clarke on Tuesday.

At first sight the dramatic reduction is a mystery, although the refusal of shoppers to return to 1980s spending habits will inevitably result in lower VAT revenues.

The corporation tax shortfall is most surprising, perhaps reflecting accountants' ability to defer payments through clever schemes the Inland Revenue attacked this week.

Company profits have soared since the recessionary trough of 1991/2. That should have come through in higher corporation tax payments last year, continuing to rise with profits over the next couple of years. But the Treasury's prediction of corporation tax receipts in 1996/7 has been slashed from £31 billion to £27 billion.

The reason, for all three taxes, appears to be that last year's forecasts were far too optimistic. The table shows that actual receipts in 1994/5 were £12 billion higher than in the previous year for all three taxes. And except for VAT, the forecast for 1995/6 has been nudged down only slightly, to figures which still represent a higher take than last year.

If these forecasts are right, the total take for the three taxes will be £138 billion for 1995/6, £14 billion or 11 per cent higher than last year.

The much-reduced forecasts for the following year, 1996/97, still show a continued rise in the tax take, but not as much as predicted last year.

The tax gap (£bn)

Actual receipts	Income tax	Corp tax	VAT
1991/1992	58	18	36
1992/1993	57	16	37
1993/1994	58	15	39
1994/1995	63	19	42
Forecasts 1995/1996			
Last year	70	26	49
This year	69	25	44
Forecasts 1996/1997			
Last year	75	31	53
This year	70	27	48

Ken's uncanny confidence is misplaced

Commentary



Will Hutton

A DAY later and the economic and political complacency that lay behind the Chancellor's Budget judgment seems even more remarkable. It is not merely that his view of the economy is overly sanguine: it is that Mr Clarke has either adopted a fatalistic view of Conservative prospects or genuinely believes that Labour is so unfit to govern and Conservative supremacy so God-given that Labour's poll lead will dissolve naturally over the next 12 months as long as he plays safe.

In this the triumvirate that runs the Government — Messrs Major, Heseltine and Clarke — has made a serious misjudgment. The likely outlook for the economy next year is not the 3 per cent growth forecast on Tuesday but nearer 2 per cent, and even that is dependent on early interest rate cuts. As a result the projections for public borrowing when the Chancellor draws up his last Budget of this parliament next November will have improved by much less than he anticipates.

The tax cuts he plans in this second bite at the cherry thus can be only a slightly beefed-up version of Tuesday's — at best a couple of pence off the standard rate. In any case it will be in consumers pockets for just a few weeks before the latest date on which the next election must be held.

The Conservatives must look to some big change in the zeitgeist to improve their fortunes and the prospects for that are unpromising. As matters stand all that now lies between them and one of the more epic defeats in modern times is the Labour Party failing to maintain a united front — and here there are dangerous auguries that both its modernisers and traditional left would do well to ponder.

First the economy. The Treasury's own explanation of its forecast set out in the Red Book is little more than a series of assertions, brushing off the issues concerning serious analysts rather than arguing them through.

For example two leading City investment houses, Goldman Sachs and Flemings, are united in forecasting growth of as little as 1.75 per cent next year. Demand has been so weak over the last six months, they say, that manufacturers and retailers have built up unwanted stocks.

Even if the Treasury is right to be optimistic about increased consumer spending from now on, buyers' needs will be met from those stocks rather than higher production and employment. Over the next six months the talk will be of relative stagnation, rising unemployent, an increasing trade deficit and depressed inflation — hardly the stuff of economic dreams.

The consensus is that in the second half of next year the economy will start to mend, which the interest rate cut in December now agreed between the Treasury and the Bank of England is aimed to cement. But cyclical downturns have a nasty habit of becoming self-reinforcing, and even if the worst is avoided the whole discourse of debate will be one of continued economic failure and rising social distress.

Moreover, the public is no longer prepared to give the Conservatives the benefit of the doubt. The Tories, as between the wars, have associated their interests almost exclusively with those of business and the better-off, notwithstanding Mr Clarke's efforts to portray his Budget as one designed for ordinary families. Rising education and health spending, he said at yesterday's press conference, unconsciously echoing Dennis Healey's old appeals to the social wage in the 1970s, were as much a part of family living standards as straight tax cuts.

But so anxious has the Chancellor been to offer tax reductions, that in truth he has only managed to spare health and education spending from further damaging real cuts. Moreover the tax cuts have been distributed very unfairly — as the simulations of the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the figures supplied to the Guardian by Coopers and Lybrand yesterday underline. Suddenly tax fairness rather than simple tax reduction is emerging as a front-line political issue.

Which is all grist to the mill to the Labour Party, now genuinely beginning to believe that its moment has come. But as power becomes more certain, so the debates about policy become less academic and will inform the success of a Labour government.

> It is all grist to the mill of the Labour party, now truly beginning to believe that its moment has come

Keeping the lid on these developments — as highlighted by the Andrew Smith letter leaked to Tribune today saying that all shadow cabinet members must be ultra-rigorous on spending commitments — can only provide genuine party unity if it is backed by a powerful unifying political idea with roots that are recognisably in Britain's left tradition. This, so far, has only been partially achieved.

The modernisers, in short, have to balance between driving for the political centre while keeping the left onside while the left has to know just how far it dare press its arguments without risking accusations of creating splits. It is New Labour's greatest maturity test but, if passed, power is as certain as it can be in any democracy.

Analysis by PAUL JOHNSON and JAYNE TAYLOR of the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows how the rich benefit most

Five-cut trick turns out to be regressive

THE Budget's five separate income tax cuts have no impact upon the poorest groups (approximately one third of the population) whose income is below the level at which tax becomes payable.

The combined effect of the five measures provides the largest proportionate gains, in terms of lower tax bills, for the richest 20 per cent of the population, with gains generally increasing as income rises. In other words, the package of tax cuts is regressive.

The effect of each individual tax-cutting measure on different income groups varies. For example, the cut in the basic rate helps only those who pay tax at the basic or higher rate, and actually helps those whose taxable income is at or above the higher rate threshold the most. This is because higher earners have more income on which they pay basic rate tax.

The Chancellor also increased the level of income at which higher rate tax becomes payable, as a way of dealing with the concern over the large rise in the number of higher rate taxpayers in the past five years. (There are now well over 2 million higher rate taxpayers.)

This cut in the basic rate limit will at least halt this growth, but it will only help those who pay tax at the higher rate — the richest 6 per cent of the adult population.

Not all of the tax-cutting measures introduced in this Budget are regressive, however. For example, widening the 20p band by more than is necessary for inflation benefits basic rate and higher rate taxpayers by the same cash amount.

This represents a higher proportion of income for individuals who pay tax at the basic rate than for those who pay tax at the higher rate, although those on the lowest incomes do not gain at all.

In addition, widening the lower rate band reduces the amount of tax paid by those individuals who are moved out of the basic rate income tax band as a result.

The most progressive tax-cutting measures, however, are those which increase allowances. The real increase in the personal allowance means that for all taxpayers the amount of income on which tax is paid is reduced.

As a result, all taxpayers gain from this move, although the cash amount is larger for higher rate taxpayers than lower or basic rate taxpayers. However, these cash sums represent a greater proportion of income for lower rate taxpayers than basic rate taxpayers, who, in turn, gain proportionately more than higher rate taxpayers.

Furthermore, increasing tax allowances removes some of the lowest earners from paying tax altogether.

In addition to widening bands, increasing allowances and lowering basic rate, the Chancellor announced a reduction in the rate of taxation on savings for the basic rate taxpayers, from 25 per cent to 20 per cent.

This course of action goes some way to alleviate many of the administrative problems in the collection of tax on savings that arose as a result of the introduction of the lower-rate band.

Although previously savings were taxed at an individual's marginal rate, unless lower rate taxpayers made an application to the Inland Revenue for a reduction in their tax bill, their savings were taxed at 25 per cent.

Consequently, the reduction in the basic rate of tax on savings to 20 per cent removes the possibility of lower-rate taxpayers being overtaxed in this way.

It also benefits the majority of people who keep their money in bank and building society accounts, bringing their tax treatment closer to that of those who can afford to invest in tax privileged personal equity plans (PEPs) and tax-exempt special savings accounts (Tessas).

Given the temptation facing the Chancellor to spend all his available money on cutting the basic rate of tax, we should be grateful that he used at least some of it to increase allowances.

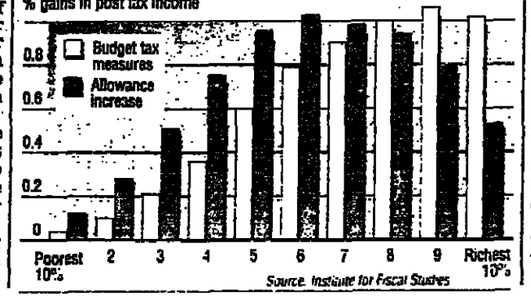
That it would have been preferable to spend it all in this way is illustrated in the table below, which compares the effects of the Budget changes with the consequences of spending all the money on raising allowances.

The richest groups, to the right of the table, clearly do better from the Budget changes.

The poorer groups, towards the left, would have done better from an allowance increase.

A fairer share of the jam?

What the Chancellor did, and what he could have done





A Chancellor for the better-off PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

Survey says lower spirit duty will boost take

Alcohol

Richard Thomas

TREASURY coffers could benefit from the 27p cut in duty on a bottle of spirits announced on Tuesday as consumers make the most of the lower price tags and stock up drink cabinets, an analysis released yesterday by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests.

IFS research officer Sarah Tanner said a pick-up in the volume of sales should more than offset any revenue implications of the reduced rate of duty. As a result, the tax take from spirit duties could outstrip the £1.7 billion official forecast for 1996-97.

"Spirits are still over-taxed compared to other alcholic drinks," Ms Tanner said last night. But she downplayed the importance of cross-border shopping for spirits. "The evidence is that wine is much more affected."

Although the drop in duty has been welcomed by the drinks industry, the cut almost exactly mirrors the rise in duty forced on the Chancellor last year when he failed to push through the second stage of the rise in VAT on fuel. "He has really just gone back to where he started," said Ms Tanner.

The IFS also welcomed the Chancellor's move to increase duties on strong cider, which tackles an anomaly in the tax system.

Treasury officials cast Net as wide as they can

Online

Azeem Azhar

LIKE so much else these days, Chancellor Kenneth Clarke's Budget speech on Tuesday was paraded out onto the nascent information superhighway, the Internet.

The Treasury provided the Chancellor's speech, while the BBC and several accountancy firms concentrated their efforts on initial reactions and analysis.

Interest in the services, held on the world-wide web, the multimedia part of the Internet, was considerable. Lee Chamberlain, the Treasury's Internet editor, said the Treasury's world-wide web server had been accessed 40,000 times between 5pm and 6pm on Tuesday, and a further 65,000 times since.

The BBC, which with the Press Association, provided news, analysis and pictures of the Chancellor's speech was accessed 155,000 times.

Punters were treated to more than just blurred pictures of the Chancellor: the effects of the Budget on supposedly typical families, such as Arthur and Pauline Fowler of EastEnders were also published.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies produced a "what the Budget means to you" model where users could give their income and spending details and find out how much better or worse off they were.

Lilley cuts hit disabled in hospital

Benefits

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

DISABLED people yesterday became belated victims of the Government's tax-cutting Budget when Peter Lilley, Social Security Secretary, announced plans to cut their benefit if they have a long spell in hospital.

The move would hit some of the most vulnerable and profoundly disabled people who are cared for in long-stay hospitals. One leading campaigner for people with learning disabilities, or mental handicap, described it as "barbarous".

The cut was revealed as Mr Lilley gave details of his department's £90 billion spending plans for next year. On Tuesday, he had announced curbs on benefits for lone parents and the young jobless to help save £500 million in 1996/97 and more than £1 billion the year after.

The minister said the disabled living allowance (DLA) move would merely bring it in line with other benefits which were withdrawn from people spending four weeks or more in hospital.

Under DLA, about 1.3 million disabled people receive a "mobility component", worth either £32.65 or £12.40 a week, in recognition of their costs of getting about. The proposal is to withdraw this after four weeks in hospital in the case of adults, or 12 weeks in the case of children.

As a concession, those who have been in hospital for 12 months or more at the time of the change will be allowed to keep the mobility component at the lower rate only.

Mr Lilley said: "Hospital patients, especially acute patients, have little scope to be independently mobile whilst in hospital and most of their needs are met by the NHS.

"It cannot be right to pay people who are unable to use the benefit for the purpose intended and who are already having most of their needs met by the taxpayer."

The change will have to be vetted by the Government's social security advisory committee, which has in recent years proved highly independent.

Disability groups last night gave notice that they would put up dogged opposition. Brian McGinnis, special adviser to the charity Mencap, estimated there were 11,000 people with learning disabilities in long-stay hospitals and 5,000 more in NHS community homes. He described the plan as "a barbarous attempt to save money ... mobility allowance was introduced to enable people whose lives were most restricted to enjoy some of the benefits that the rest of us take for granted."

Pauline Thompson, director of the Disablement Income Group, an advice and pressure group, said: "Rather than stopping it altogether, why didn't the minister look at ways of hospitals using this money creatively, such as paying for minibuses for trips out?"

Mr Lilley yesterday reiterated his intention to "narrow the gap between the benefits which go to lone parents and those which go to couples". One-parent benefit and the income support lone parent premium, which together cost £600 million a year, are being frozen at their current rates and merged with other benefits. They are expected to be gradually phased out.

Housing benefit for the under-25s is to be limited to the average cost of shared accommodation in the locality, saving £100 million over three years. The minister confirmed that the minimum payment of maintenance levied by the Child Support Agency would be doubled from £2.35 a week to £4.80.

Other announcements included:

- An increase from £40 a week to £60 in the gross child care allowance payable to parents on family credit.
- A doubling to £20 in the money which social security claimants can receive from charity without it eroding their benefits.
- A further crackdown on benefit fraud, including a commitment to more home visits by officials and a tougher approach to employers who collude with staff who work and claim.

Mr Lilley said his department's £90 billion budget was lower than had been planned two years ago. Total savings from measures he had introduced would be worth £3.5 billion next year, rising to £5 billion by the end of the decade.

Chris Smith, his Labour shadow, said Mr Liley's "piecemeal" measures lacked a coherent plan for getting people off benefits and into work.



Theresa Peters and her son Kieran: 'I'd like to see Mr Clarke surviving at this level' PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

Figures belie Clarke stance on lone parents

Sarah Boseley investigates family budgets after Chancellor's assertion on 'unchanging' cost of caring for children

"THE costs and responsibilities of having children are the same for couples as they are for single people," the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, declared in his Budget speech as a precursor to cuts in benefit for lone parents.

Yesterday Gingerbread, one of the support organisations for lone parents, pointed out both sorts of family had to pay unchanged household overheads such as electricity and gas bills, regardless of the number of adults bringing in either wages or benefit. Kieran Murphy, Gingerbread's chief executive, said the the fact was that all families on income support were impoverished. "Lone parents are already one of the most vulnerable groups in society and one of the poorest. Cutting back will have a direct effect on their diet and health."

Research compiled by the Family Budget Unit based at King's College, London, on behalf of the Child Poverty Action Group shows graphically by how slight a margin lone parents benefit over couples with families on income support.

In April 1993, they found that a couple with two children on a low-cost budget (including only two-thirds of items most people feel are necessities) spent £142.56 a week on income support of £108.75. A lone parent with two children spent £111.73 on income support of £88.65.

The unit found that costs per person of any family decreased as the number of people in the household rose. At October 1994 prices, a modest but adequate standard of living for a couple with a boy of 10 and a girl of four would cost £358.24. It would cost a woman with those children £335.74. The lone parent has particularly high childcare costs, with no possibility of a partner covering for their absence whether for work or a break from the strain of responsibility.

Family type	Minimum budget	Income Support	% met by income support
2 adults +2 children	£142.56	£108.75	76%
Lone mother+2 children	£111.73	£88.65	79%

Source: Family Budget Unit, King's College, London

% gross income spent on	lone parent + 1 child	couple + 1 child
Fuel	7.5	3.2
Food	20.2	12.6
Household goods & services	16.0	10.3
Housing	17.8	15.4
Normal weekly gross income	£164.38	£449.00

The average weekly gross income in the UK in 1992 was £343.

Source: family Expenditure Survey 1992.

Theresa Peters has been a lone parent for three years, caring for her five-year-old son Kieran. Before her marriage broke up, she was a teacher on £20,000 a year. With the split the family lost not only its main breadwinner but also her income. She lives in the marital terrace house in Harrow, north-west London, which she cannot sell because she is deep in negative equity. On benefit, the mortgage interest is paid. She cannot earn enough by herself to pay the mortgage and childcare costs.

Her income support is £67.50 a week. "I go to the second-hand shops for clothing, and beans on toast are pretty economical," she said. "A lot of the time you aren't eating properly and you feel unwell with the worry. The doctor says you must eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, but it's pretty well impossible to afford them."

The building society analysed her spending and "could not make out how I managed at all." She has had to negotiate to pay electricity bills by installments and she sits with her son by the fire, rather than put the central heating on. "I can't go out," she said. "I can't even contemplate it. I'd like to see Mr Clarke survive and keep his dignity living at this reduced level."

World Service faces £5m cut

BBC

Andrew Culf Media Correspondent

SENIOR BBC executives expressed deep anxiety last night at a swingeing 20 per cent cut in the World Service's budget.

Despite an all-party campaign to stave off further cuts, the Foreign Office announced a £5.4 million reduction in the service's capital budget for 1996/97, effectively tearing up a three-year funding agreement.

Marmaduke Hussey, the BBC's chairman, said there would be an inevitable reduction in the range of programme services. "The World Service is an acknowledged national asset. We accept that it cannot be seen in isolation from the totality of the Budget. On the other hand, I am worried lest these proposed cuts have a greater effect on our services than is immediately apparent."

The cuts will mean a reduction in money to upgrade transmitters and improve reception — but if urgent work is required funds will have to be found from the programme budget.

Bob Phillis, deputy director general and chairman of BBC Worldwide, said: "The World Service underpins all the BBC's international activities. I am deeply anxious at any cuts which might threaten damage to programme services, expecially at a time when audiences are at a record level."

The world service's funding in the form of grant-in-aid from the Treasury is agreed in advance in a three-year deal, called a triennium.

The BBC was dismayed at the precedent of the arrangement being torn up, saying it made long-term planning almost impossible. It had already been forced to make a £6 million cut in the capital budget for 1996/97 before the Budget. The change represents a 20 per cent cut on the original £24.5 million capital budget, £16 million of which was earmarked for investment in transmitters and satellite distribution.

Planning figures from the Foreign Office for 1997/98 indicate a further £8.6 million reduction, mainly on the capital budget, but also with an impact on operating costs.

In July the service's French language satellite news and music service for commercial stations in France was closed.

The 1996/97 broadcasting grant remains unaltered at £135 million. BBC World Service broadcasts in 41 languages to 133 million people.

Tax changes could force up housing association rents

Grants

James Meikle, Community Affairs Editor

HOUSING associations reacted angrily yesterday to changes in tax rules that could force up rents and slow renovation programmes, particularly on estates which have transferred out of local authority control.

Non-charitable associations, owning or managing about 450,000 homes out of the million in the sector, will lose the right to claim grants which reimburse corporation and income tax on their surpluses each year. The change, to be phased in from April 1997, was announced by housing minister David Curry who said it would not make sense to continue the grants. It will save £55 million a year.

The position for charitable associations will be unchanged, opening the possibility of different rent levels in the council, charitable and non-charitable sectors.

Housing experts say the changes could hinder the creation of new housing companies.

More associations may choose charitable status to avoid difficulties but suspect the Government aims to change the way they are financed as well.

News in brief

Hidden measure may raise stamp prices

THE Post Office could signal the first increase in stamp prices since November 1993 — perhaps as early as today — because of hidden measures in the Budget forcing it to pay a sharply increased dividend to the Treasury, the main watchdog for the industry warned last night. Post Office directors are preparing to comment on the Budget today and the Post Office Users' National Council believes they will announce increases.

POUNC expressed its dismay at discovering that the Budget included proposals to increase the amount the Post Office pays to the Treasury by £120 million to £298 million for the financial year starting next April. It described the 70 per cent increase as arbitrary and a reversal of the Government's pledge to move financial relations with the Post Office on to a more commercial footing following the collapse of privatisation plans. Budget papers reveal that the Post Office's external financing limit — under which it pays a dividend based on forecast profits — is to be increased to £317 million in the year from April 1997 and £310 million for the following year. POUNC chairman, John Hackney, said a swingeing increase in the EFL in 1992 had led to a 1p increase in first and second class stamps. — *Simon Beavis*

Film industry loses £2m

THE British film industry became one of the first victims of the Government's Budget cuts last night when the Department of National Heritage withdrew from the main European film funding agency, Eurimages. The £2 million grant cut was announced to the Strasbourg-based organisation by fax, leaving staff shocked that Britain had become the first country unilaterally to pull out of Eurimages, which last year provided backing for nearly a third of films made in Britain. David Hancock, the financial administrator, said: "This means some films which would have been made in Britain will now no longer be made because we will not be providing finance."

Since Britain joined three years ago, Eurimages has helped to finance 56 films with British producers, among them Victory, Jane Eyre, Land and Freedom and The Young Poisoner's Handbook. — *Stephen Bates in Brussels*

Scheme 'a move to workfare'

THE compulsory work experience scheme for the long-term unemployed unveiled yesterday by employment minister Eric Forth shows the Government has taken a decisive step towards America-style workfare, unemployment campaigners claimed. The £12 million pilot scheme, called Project Work, will cover 18- to 50-year-olds who have been unemployed for more than two years and will initially be tested on 6,000 people in two areas from next April. Mr Forth said those who withdrew from, or refused a place on, the six-month programme — first mentioned in Tuesday's budget speech — would lose their benefit. Michael Meacher, Labour's employment spokesman, condemned the the new scheme as "penny-pinching and cheapskate". — *Seumas Milne*

Cuts 'hit pollution schemes'

FUNDING for local transport schemes has been slashed by 20 per cent in the Budget, Labour claimed last night, resulting in less money for local authorities to spend on moves to cut pollution. Next year's local transport budgets will receive £160 million less from Government than last year's £980 million, which Labour's transport spokesman Graham Allen said contradicted Monday's statement by transport minister Steven Norris, who said that "local authorities are best placed to tackle the problems caused by urban congestion in their areas. The Government will continue to assist through the resources that they make available to local authorities." — *Rebecca Smithers*

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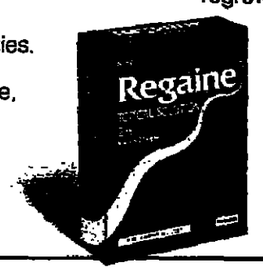
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FinanceGuardian

Lloyd's tells Names: you can't avoid paying up

Pauline Springett

LLOYD'S of London yesterday turned the screws on its loss-making Names by warning that they would be ruthlessly pursued by the Department of Trade and Industry for immediate payment of their losses if they forced the collapse of the debt-stricken market.

"Run-off would inflict severe damage on all categories of members and would not result in their being able to avoid their liabilities," said Lloyd's. A run-off happens when an insurer stops accepting business.

The stark warning — the most explicit yet that Lloyd's might collapse — was in reaction to what spokesmen described as "misleading propaganda" by some prominent Names' action group leaders.

Several have argued that investing Names would be better off if Lloyd's refused to pay its losses, tore up its polices and ceased to trade. They have suggested that policyholders would find it too complicated to pursue each Name individually and that Names might therefore avoid payment.

The future of Lloyd's has reached a critical stage. Its total losses for the past five years are now expected to be as high as £11.4 billion. Many Names are facing losses of more than £1 million and at least half a dozen are believed to have killed themselves as a direct result of the financial strain suffered.

But a Lloyd's legal adviser said: "There is no escape for the Names. If you force the society into run-off of any kind, the DTI powers will be triggered. It is quite clear that Names will be told to put up their assets to meet their liabilities."

The adviser contrasted this to Lloyd's own approach, which allowed Names to pay as much as they could afford over time. He said the proposed £2.8 billion reconstruction and renewal package would allow Names to quit Lloyd's for an affordable final payment.

He stressed that Lloyd's was under a legal obligation to balance the interests of Names and policyholders. The DTI had a duty only to policyholders.

Lloyd's detailed argument against the closure of the market was contained in an eight-page document sent to all agents. Written with the help of City lawyers Freshfields, it has been approved by the DTI.

Action group leaders angrily condemned the announcement as "sabre rattling scare tactics".

Some warned that it might signal a harsher approach to the Names by Ron Sandler, the market's chief executive.

Alan Porter, chairman of the Devonshire and Cuthbert Heath Names action groups, said the move was a spoiling tactic by Lloyd's to minimise the effect of next week's report by the Lloyd's Names Associations Working Party on the future of the market.

Loss-making Name Clive Francis said: "An orderly run-off has several distinct advantages for the Names"

Some 14,000 Names are suing for compensation over their losses. Lloyd's is anxious to secure its future with the Names acceptance of the £2.8 billion package which it hopes will end the litigation and enable it to continue trading.



Ron Sandler . . . Taking a tough approach

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER



Rows ring in top job round

Nicholas Bannister
Technology Editor

ENERGIS, Britain's third largest telecom company, yesterday added to the management turmoil at the top of the industry by announcing it had poached a senior British Telecom executive to fill the vacancy left by the abrupt June departure of chief executive David Dey.

The company said Mike Grabiner, director of BT's European operations, would be joining as chief executive in January. Gordon Owen, who has been acting chief executive since June would continue as chairman.

Mr Dey quit after a boardroom row with Mr Owen over the direction of the company. His departure came at an awkward time for Energis's parent company, the National Grid, awaiting flotation.

Boardroom rows caused by policy or personality have recently wracked British telecom companies. Mr Owen was forced to quit as group managing director of Cable and Wireless in 1991 after crossing swords with its new chairman, Lord Young, the former Tory minister. Lord Young, in turn, was booted out of C&W last week after a humiliating boardroom bust-up which also saw the departure of James Ross, the man he brought in to succeed Mr Owen.

C&W has appointed Dr Brian Smith, a former non-executive director now heading the airports company BAA, as non-executive chairman. He will oversee the search for a new chief executive. C&W's boardroom problems came into the open in the summer when Duncan Lewis resigned as chief executive of the group's Mercury Communications subsidiary, after just nine months.

BT also announced top management changes last week but stressed they were not the result of boardroom dissension. Group managing director Michael Hepher is leaving the group while chairman Sir Iain Vallance is handing over his chief executive's role at the end of the year to Peter Bonfield of ICL computers.

Pools family urged to back float

Littlewoods dynasty under pressure, reports Patrick Donovan

THE vastly wealthy Moores family which owns the Littlewoods empire is being urged to endorse a £1 billion-plus stock market flotation after an exhaustive review of the pools-to-retail chain's prospects drawn up by the company's financial advisers.

Family members were yesterday told that a public sale of shares represented the best option in a presentation to a private meeting of the 32 Moores shareholders which had been convened in a London hotel.

The prospect represents a huge decision for the owners of Britain's biggest private company as they have jealously guarded their control over the company which was started by their patriarch, the late Sir John Moores, in 1923. Any change in ownership would cause huge interest within the firm's home town of Liverpool as the business is a major regional employer and Moores family members are prominent civic figures.

However, the recommendation comes at a critical time for the shareholders as family members will next week vote on whether to co-operate with a £1.2 billion take-over bid proposition which is being put together by a consortium of venture capitalists.

The surprise recommendation to float was made after a full business assessment by Michael Gatenby, a former director of Charterhouse, the City investment bank. Mr Gatenby was commissioned by the family to consider all possibilities for future ownership. These included remaining private, buying back their family shares or selling off the business in a take-over.

Sources close to the meeting added that the company would be likely to sell off a minority holding if it decides to go for a stock market listing. And the source added that no sell-off would be likely in the short term. Urgent action is considered necessary to turn around the company which has been badly hit by the slump in pools income resulting from the success of the National Lottery.

But the recommendation will reinforce family members' determination to throw out the take-over offer which is known as Bidco. The bidders are headed by Barry Dale, a former Littlewoods chief executive who was ousted by the family in March.

Expectation is growing that the bid will be roundly rejected when the family come together to hold a formal vote on whether to proceed with the bid. The resolution, to be put to shareholders at an extraordinary general meeting to be held at the Littlewoods Liverpool headquarters next Thursday, will ask if they are prepared to allow Bidco to examine their books. If the resolution is overturned, it will be interpreted as a vote against the entire take-over bid.

A spokesman for Bidco yesterday said: "It is in the shareholders' best interests to consider all the options". It is expected that the bidders will write to all family shareholders over the next few days, urging them to accept the deal.

However, the Littlewoods board has already dampened a lot of enthusiasm for a quick take-over by offering shareholders the prospect of cashing in shares by setting up a special buy-back pool worth up to £250 million. This will provide an exit route for some of the younger family members who are understood to have favoured a take-over bid because of their wish to realise cash from the Littlewoods investment. The company has not yet disclosed at what price it is prepared to buy back the privately held shares.

Littlewoods was yesterday unavailable for comment.

Margins slip on banana skins

Outlook/Safeway remains buoyant under pressure, **Roger Cowe** writes

MARGINS at Safeway are under pressure as supermarkets go bananas on fruit and produce prices, but the company yesterday reported buoyant sales and profits for the first half of the year. The figures for its parent, Argyll Group, look less bouncy, but only because of the disposal of Lo-Cost and the tail of smaller Safeway stores.

Banana prices have fallen from 40p per pound to as low as 19p, and the price now seems to have settled at 29p, which is still below cost price because of a glut of the fruit. With banana sales about 1 per cent of a supermarket's takings, this price war has taken its toll of profit margins.

But the produce war, apparently prompted by Asda's vigorous attempts to improve its position in an area which it had previously neglected, rages further than the banana shelves. It has also seen the other supermarket chains dropping prices to Asda's level on such mundane products as carrots, onions, iceberg lettuce and cauliflowers. Frozen turkey prices are also far from frozen, recently falling as low as 39p per pound in what has become a Christmas tradition of price cutting by the supermarket groups.

The result is that Safeway's gross profit margin — the difference between cost and selling price — has been 0.5 per cent below last year's level, and will continue to be lower, although the gap will perhaps narrow.

Safeway sales are booming, however. Even before adding the impact of inflation and new stores, sales volumes in the first half-year were up by nearly 5 per cent on 1994. And the rate of increase has increased towards 7 per cent in the last few weeks. Hence, Safeway's operating profit was 9 per cent higher in the first half year, despite the margin fall which was down to 0.2 per cent at the net profit level thanks to operating efficiencies.

The booming sales are a testament to the Safeway 2000 programme of revitalising the chain's marketing stance. Safeway 2000 aimed to attack the chain's weaknesses in what the Chancellor might call Middle England — the mainstream superstore-shopping families. And it seems to be working, as more family shoppers do their main shop at Safeway, resulting in a higher average spend and higher sales per square foot.

But with Asda and Tesco also powering ahead, it will not be easy for Safeway to continue its improved sales performance. It will be particularly tough if Sainsbury gets its act together again, as surely it must, and fights to retrieve the title of supermarket leader which it has lost over the past year while its attention has perhaps been distracted by the acquisiton of Texas Homecare.

Argyll

Stock market value	£3.5bn
Share price	312p ▲ +7p
Workforce	67,000
Interest cover	4.8

½ YEAR	£	% change
Sales	3,178m	+1
Pre-tax profit	214m	+4
Earnings/share	13.2p	+3
Dividend/share	4.05p	+4

EU warned of currencies turmoil

Ian Traynor in Bonn

EUROPEAN Union leaders were warned yesterday that the EU faces currency turbulence and poisoned relations between members unless a deal between those signing up for monetary union and the remainder could be hammered out next year.

Alexandre Lamfalussy, the head of the European Monetary Institute, said that a maximum of seven of the EU's 15 members would qualify for monetary union, scheduled for launch at the beginning of 1999; and that before that decision was taken early in 1998 the relationship between those signing up for the single currency and those who fail the test or opt out would need to be agreed.

"Those who are outside will be a heterogeneous group: those who don't want in, those who do but can't, those who are close, those who are far away," said the head of the precursor to the European central bank. "Can you squeeze all these cases into a multilateral agreement? It will be hard."

There needed to be a consensus, otherwise "this could poison the whole debate".

The hiatus till those decisions are taken, he said, could bring exchange rate turbulence. "This will be a difficult period and there is no easy way out ... I do have concerns about the period leading up to the membership decision."

Germany and France are embroiled in a row over when that decision should be taken, and a 30-hour meeting of EU finance ministers in Brussels this week failed to settle the matter.

Theo Waigel, the German finance minister who is making the running on the terms for a stable single currency, emphatically refused to yield to the French yesterday, insisting that only hard economic data from 1997, not available until early 1998, could be used to decide who was fit for EMU.

Paris wants an earlier decision, using economic estimates, so that the matter is settled before parliamentary elections in March 1998. "It's absolutely essential that real data from 1997 be used for the decision," said Mr Waigel.

He ruled out the use of approximate or projected statistics for deciding who qualifies to enter the single currency.

The two finance officials were speaking in Bonn, along with Hans Tietmeyer, president of Germany's Bundesbank, at a joint session of the German parliament's finance and EU affairs committees.

Nuclear sale may be delayed by MMC power industry inquiry

Chris Barrie

THE Government's plans for privatisation received a fresh blow yesterday when a senior minister admitted that the £2.5 billion sale of the nuclear industry may be delayed by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into takeovers in the electricity industry.

Speaking to MPs on the trade and industry committee, industry minister Tim Eggar said the decision to ask the MMC to scrutinise plans by power generators, National Power and PowerGen, to take over Southern and Midlands Electricity, could delay flotation of the industry planned for next summer.

Mr Eggar insisted that delay was unlikely. He said: "There is always the possibility of delay to any flotation for a number of reasons ... [(The MMC] should not delay it but you can never be certain."

Mr Eggar told the MPs, who are investigating the nuclear sale, that the Government would set up a segregated fund to cover the costs of decommissioning the atomic power stations which are to be privatised.

Based in Scotland, the fund will receive an endowment before the industry is floated. It will also be supported by payments from the nuclear companies, reviewed every five years.

The funding company will be controlled by a trust independent of the nuclear operators. The trustees would be "knowledgeable and expert", Mr Eggar said.

Mr Eggar ruled out a similar fund for the elderly Magnox reactors which will stay in state hands.

In a written submission to the committee, the trade and industry department revealed that the Government will hold golden shares in British Energy, the holding company to be privatised, for at least ten years. Similar shares will be held in the operating companies.

● South Wales Electricity has told potential suitor Welsh Water that it would not recommend a bid unless it was pitched at more than £9 a share.

Late tycoon 'had a defence against dishonesty charge'

Maxwell trial

Dan Atkinson

ROBERT Maxwell's dishonesty has not been proved, an Old Bailey court was told yesterday. Had he lived to stand trial with his son Kevin, he would have had a defence.

Kevin Maxwell's QC, Alun Jones, said it was unfair of the Crown to charge Robert Maxwell's son with conspiring with someone unable to defend himself.

"Robert Maxwell's death, we argue, has precipitated this trial," said Mr Jones. He went on to imagine answers the publishing tycoon might have given to a court.

He might, said Mr Jones, have described Kevin as "too polite" to push bankers into supporting the Maxwell empire during the dark days of late 1991 and might have suggested Kevin was "not interested in power sufficiently". Asked if he thought he could have saved his publishing group, Robert might have told the court: "I had far more clout than my slip of a son."

Mr Jones was making his final address to the jury. Kevin denies one charge of conspiring with Robert to defraud pension funds. Kevin, his brother, Ian, and financial adviser Larry Trachtenberg deny a second similar charge.

Mr Jones said that had Robert Maxwell lived to fight in court, "what a different case it would have been". The tycoon, he suggested, might have pointed to the huge surplus in the pension funds, the result of his own investment acumen.

The Crown case, he told the court, "is riddled with holes". The case continues today.

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Canada 2.0450	Hong Kong 11.72	New Zealand 2.29	Sweden 9.88
Cyprus 0.6925	India 53.97	Norway 9.47	Switzerland 1.72
Denmark 8.31	Ireland 0.9425	Portugal 224.00	Turkey 81,380
Finland 5.50	Israel 4.75	Saudi Arabia 5.75	USA 1.5075

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News in brief

Savoy group team discusses bid

THE Savoy Hotel Group, in which Forte holds a 68 per cent stake, yesterday said it had set up an internal committee to discuss the implications of Granada's £3.4 billion bid for the hotels and catering company. The Savoy, has for years been embroiled in a public dispute with Forte over management and strategy. Granada has indicated that if it wins control of Forte, it will sell the stake in the Savoy.

The committee will consist of the Savoy's non-Forte directors — including chairman Sir Ewan Fergusson, finance director Alan Fort and managing director Ramon Pajares. Mr Fort said there were no plans to meet Granada managers. Granada's cash and shares offer values Forte at around 326p — against last night's closing price of 344p. — *Ian King*

Summer boost for Marston

THE hot summer, coupled with acquisitions and the re-opening of refurbished pubs, helped Marston, Thompson & Evershed, the Burton-based brewer of Pedigree beer, to increase half-time profits by 13.6 per cent to £13.9 million. Overall beer volumes rose by 3.4 per cent and the company said that trading in the opening two months of the second half continued to be satisfactory.

Meanwhile, Shepherd Neame, the Kent-based regional brewer, yesterday acquired 18 pubs in London and the South-east from Phoenix Inns for £3.7 million. The purchases increase Shepherd Neame's estate to 384 pubs and mean the group has a 50 per cent larger tied estate than four years ago. — *Lisa Buckingham*

North Sea oil boom

NORTH SEA oil production in October was at its highest level for just under ten years after rising by 150,000 barrels a day to reach an average output of 2.74 million barrels a day, according to new figures from the Royal Bank of Scotland. The sharp increase in output — largely a result of the introduction of two new fields — meant that October saw the highest levels of North Sea oil production since January 1986.

British Gas has joined forces with the Argentinian group YPF to launch a joint study of oil and gas opportunities in blocks around the Falkland Islands. BG will lead a joint group studying the costs. The privatised company said that the two groups may bid in the licensing round, launched last month by the Falkland Island Government, under an agreement signed in London yesterday. — *Simon Bennis*

Travelers near £2.6bn deal

TRAVELERS Group, the US financial services giant, yesterday announced an agreement to buy Aetna Life & Casualty's property and casualty insurance operations for about $4 billion ($2.6 billion) in cash. Aetna's property and casualty operations will be merged with those of Travelers into a new holding company that will be America's fourth largest property and casualty insurance company.

Kohlberg Kravis Roberts, the leveraged buyout specialists, had also expressed interest in Aetna's property and casualty group, but there were substantial financing problems. At the same time, Travelers is reportedly poised to sell its San Francisco-based money manager, RCM Capital Management, to Dresdner Bank, Germany second-biggest bank, for at least $500 million. RCM has $25 billion under management. — *Mark Tran in New York*

Rugby Union

Wales put their faith in Bowring

David Plummer

THE Welsh Rugby Union ended more than eight months of conjecture, uncertainty and ridicule when it announced yesterday that Kevin Bowring, the former London Welsh flanker, had been appointed the first full-time national coach.

Bowring, aged 41, takes over from Alan Davies, who was shown the door in March. Alex Evans, who was caretaker coach during the summer's World Cup, decided to return to Australia next month.

Bowring's four-year contract will take him to the end of the 1999 World Cup finals, which Wales will host. Reaching the final of that tournament is his ultimate aim but he is aware that he is not starting from a lofty position; Wales have failed to qualify for the knock-out stages of the last two World Cups and they were white-washed in last year's Five Nations Championship.

"I am overwhelmed by the sheer excitement of the challenge," said Bowring, who has emerged from the relative obscurity of the Wales Under-20, Under-21 and A squads, which he has coached in succession over the past six years.

Several names have been canvassed since Davies's departure; Evans, Ian McGeechan, John Hart, Bob Dwyer, Pierre Villepreux, Vance Stewart of Canterbury and Geoff Cooke were the most celebrated of them, but Bowring was the one constant.

He was offered the World Cup caretaker role but turned it down because of his commitments as a teacher at Clifton College. For the same reason he declined the chance to take Wales to South Africa for a two-match tour in September.

As the coach of Wales A since 1992, Bowring was always the favourite Welsh candidate but the prevailing opinion on the WRU was that, so deep had the recession in Wales's fortunes been, a coach from outside the country was needed and one with significant international experience.

Various coaches were sounded out but showed little interest. The WRU shortlisted four: Bowring, the Wales A assistant coach Dennis John, Villepreux and the Wales rugby league coach Clive Griffiths. Villepreux, the former France full-back, finally said he would be available in a consultative capacity; and Griffiths telephoned this week to say he would not attend for interview because the WRU had not had the courtesy to approach his employers Warrington.

Bowring will meet his new employers on Saturday and start officially when the term at Clifton College ends next month.

Meanwile, the WRU has had 48 replies to its advertisement for a director of rugby, a week before the closing date. The director's role will be general rather than specific but he will work in tandem with the coach.



Dallaglio delivers . . . the London forward goes over for a try PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

Tour match: London Division 32, Western Samoans 40

Three-try Lima inflicts capital punishment

Robert Armstrong at Twickenham

THE England manager Jack Rowell saw London lose to the slick, competitive Samoans by the odd try in nine in a fast-moving contest.

Brian Lima, the Samoan Test wing, spearheaded his side's scoring spree with a brilliant hat-trick of tries, and Mick Watson, the Harlequins forward, responded with a face-saving double.

David Pears, the London fly-half, limped off at half-time with an ankle injury that damages his prospects of being chosen for the Test at Twickenham on December 16. The hooker Brian Moore worked hard to reignite his fading international career but the Samoan front row refused to be overawed and did well in broken play.

The hosts trailed 35-11 early in the second half and had to keep raising their game merely to prevent the Samoans from piling on the agony.

Rowell, who will probably announce his England team next Wednesday, may have been encouraged by the prodigious contributions of Watson and Dallaglio — the latter also scored a try — not to mention the lively scrum-half and captain Bates. But persistent loss of control, mediocre handling and incompetent option-taking by the London backs frequently handed possession back to the Samoans. "We needed more time together," said Bates.

When Brian Williams, the Western Samoa coach, was asked which London players had impressed him he struggled to progress beyond Dallaglio, pick of the back-row forwards. For his part, Rowell no doubt noted Diprose's surging drives and O'Leary's good work on the right flank.

London seemed ready to take control when Watson, with the help of Leonard and Snow, scored a 28th-minute try on the right to give his side a 8-6 lead. But it merely sparked a deluge of Samoan points — 29 in 27 minutes — that effectively earned the tourists victory within the hour.

The ball whipped through four pairs of hands before Lima scored his first try in the right corner and on the stroke of half-time Lam exposed London's lack of cover at the posts, working a loop with Smith with an eye to making the touchdown. After the interval Lima took a quick tap penalty to score on the left, the fly-half Kellett landed his third long-range penalty, and Lima worked a splendid scissors to score between the posts.

London pulled back 21 points in the final quarter with well-worked tries at the posts by Watson, Dallaglio and Adebayo, all converted by Gregory, Pears's replacement. The Samoans, though, always remained at least two scores in front thanks to another opportunist try, by the replacement Vaega in the right corner.

LONDON: J Ufton (Wasps); D O'Leary (Harlequins), N Greenstock (Wasps) P Mensah (Harlequins), A Adebayo (Bath); D Pears (Harlequins; G Gregory, Wasps, 47min), S Bates (Wasps, capt). J Leonard, B Moore (both Harlequins) I Dunston (Wasps), A Snow, M Watson (both Harlequins), L Dallaglio (Wasps), A Diprose (Saracens), R Jenkins (Harlequins).

WESTERN SAMOA: A Aiolupo; B Lima, S Leaega, G Leaupepe (Vaega, 62), T Fanaaso; D Kellett, J Filemu; M Mika, T Leiasamaivao, G Latu, M Birtwhistle, P Leavasa, S Smith, P Lam (capt), S Kaleta.

Referee: N Lasaga (France)

Scotland's royal appointment

PETER PHILLIPS, the Queen's grandson, will become the first member of the Royal Family to win an international cap when he plays for Scottish Schools against France at the Heriot's FP ground in Edinburgh on December 22.

His mother, the Princess Royal, represented Britain in equestrian events at the 1972 Munich Olympics.

The 18-year-old, who plays flanker and is one of two Gordonstoun pupils in the team, was born in London but qualifies under Scottish Rugby Union rules which require three years' residence in the country.

● Cambridge University recovered after being 17-0 down to Steele-Bodger's XV to win the annual fixture 35-29 at Grange Road yesterday. The Ireland scrum-half Niall Hogan scored a hat-trick of tries for the invitation side. Dan Maslen (2), James Rutter, Rob Ashforth and Steve Sexton scored tries for the students, now firm favourites for the University Match on Tuesday week.

Leicester

12.30 Ocean Hawk
1.00 Reine de la Chasse
1.30 Luks Akura
2.00 Philip's Woody
2.30 Duke Of Lancaster
3.00 Karshi (nb)
3.30 Sassiver

★ Denotes blinkers. Going: Good to firm (Chase); Good to soft (Hurdles)
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest N.H. outing

12.30 BEGINNERS' JUVENILE NOVICES' HURDLE (DIV I) 3YO 2m £2,637
101 0153 OCEAN HAWK (12) (D) N Twiston-Davies 11-5 C Llewellyn
102 ALL OVER RED ROVER A Carroll 10-12 W Marston
103 BIASED VIEW R Thompson 10-12 V Smith
104 U BOURDONNER (15) W Jenks 10-12 T Jenks
105 CLEAN EDGE M Tompkins 10-12 D Gallagher
106 EL DON M Ryan 10-12 J Ryan
107 P EMBEZZLER (16) S Gollings 10-12 D Bentley
108 R0 JUST BY CHANCE (58) A Barrow 10-12 doubtful
109 PARKLIFE P Haslam 10-12 M Foster
110 0 XAIPETE (19) G Moore 10-12 J Callaghan
111 0 ZINGIBAR (47) J Bradley 10-12 Guy Lewis (3)
112 2352 CUILLIN CAPER (28) T Watson 10-7 J R Kavanagh
113 FORTUNES ROSE J King 10-7 G Upton
114 P5P HUISH CROSS (16) S Knight 10-7 S Burrough
115 LADY KATE K Cunningham-Brown 10-7 R Greene
116 6 LAST LAUGH (18) M Pipe 10-7 D Bridgwater
117 35 PEDALTOTHEMETAL (12) P Mitchell 10-7 G Tormey (3)
118 P PHILS FORTUNE (40) K Bridgwater 10-7 D Leahy
119 SALFRILL Mrs P Sly 10-7 R Marley
TOP FORM TIPS: Ocean Hawk 8, Last Laugh 7, Cuillin Caper 6.
Betting: 7-2 Ocean Hawk, 5-1 Last Laugh, 6-1 Clean Edge, 8-1 Pedaltothemetal, 10-1 Cuillin Caper, 12-1 El Don. 19 runners.

1.00 BEGINNERS' JUVENILE NOVICES' HURDLE (DIV II) 3YO 2m £2,637
201 21 PROPHETS HONOUR (7) (D) P Haslam 11-5 M Foster
202 0 BARK'N'BITE (18) Mrs M Reveley 10-12 P Niven
203 COURT JOKER Miss H Knight 10-12 J F Titley
204 0 ELITE JUSTICE (7) N Tinkler 10-12 C Llewellyn
205 FLORISMART B Baugh 10-12 Gary Lyons
206 0 LAAL (18) M Barraclough 10-12 S McNeill
207 (28 MAGICAL BID (15) J Bradley 10-12 Guy Lewis (3) ★
208 4 NIGHT TIME (47) D Sherwood 10-12 J A McCarthy
209 PARK RIDGE T Mills 10-12 G Bradley
210 6F PATS LADS (40) D Burchell 10-12 J Prior (7)
211 6 SLAPY DAM (28) (BF) J Mackie 10-12 T Eley
212 5 THE COTTONWOOL KID (125) T Caldwell 10-12 Pat Caldwell
213 0 TO PROVE A POINT (19) J O'Neill 10-12 A Roche (3)
214 35 TOSHIBA TALK (16) B Ellison 10-12 B Harding (3)
215 5 FOREST WILL (7) J Spearing 10-7 J Lodder
216 5 LAST SPIN (47) J Jenkins 10-7 J Railton
217 20 QUALITAIR PRIDE (28) J Bottomley 10-7 D Byrne
218 5 REINE DE LA CHASSE (16) (BF) D Nicholson 10-7 W Marston
TOP FORM TIPS: Prophets Honour 8, Reine de la Chasse 7, Night Time 6.
Betting: 3-1 Reine de la Chasse, 4-1 Prophets Honour, 6-1 Night Time, 8-1 Court Joker, 10-1 Slapy Dam, Last Spin, Toshiba Talk. 18 runners.

1.30 BARKBY SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE 2m 4f 110yds £2,075
301 00-5-FP OLD MONEY (27) C Broad 9-12-0 W Marston
302 35PB5-5 SHAMSHOM AL ARAB (7) B Ellison 7-11-12 Miss V Haigh
303 6U102-5 TARGET LINE (20) (D) (BF) Mrs S Smith 5-11-6 R Wilkinson (7)
304 34429-1 SOUL TRADER (17) (CD) N Babbage 6-11-6 G Hogan (3)
305 12 00-3P HAWTHORNE GLEN (9) Mrs M Long 8-11-3 D Gallagher
306 1430-5 LUKS AKURA (17) (D) W Clay 7-11-7 J Lodder ★
307 00/3P-05 MASTER GLEN (152) G Oldroyd 7-11-0 P Midgley (3)
308 0663-60 EDWARD SEYMOUR (15) W Jenks 8-10-12 Mr R Burton (7)
309 41400-5 KLONDIKE (14) Mrs P Sly 5-10-12 R Marley ★
310 P04-300 SMART DEBUTANTE (14) Miss S Wilson 6-10-11 M Kelsaine (7)
311 4-345P4 PENIARTH (12) R Price 9-10-4 T Jenks
312 C0P-0P3 CLOD HOPPER (18) Mrs H Parrott 5-10-4 Philip Hughes (7)
313 C00P-53 QUICK DECISION (19) J Cresswell 4-10-2 R Massey (5) ★
314 0U000 CHANCE ENCOUNTER (12) Mrs S Williams 5-10-0 C Maude ★
315 P/PC-6-3 ITS GRAND (15) J Bradley 6-10-0 Guy Lewis (3)
316 0-52005 HARD TO GET (35) M Barraclough 8-10-0 Ann Stokell
317 445-30 KINGSWOOD KITCHENS (12) A Carroll 15-10-0 D Bridgwater
TOP FORM TIPS: Soul Trader 8, Luks Akura 7, Target Line 6.
Betting: 3-1 Soul Trader, 4-1 Luks Akura, 6-1 Peniarth, 8-1 Shamshom Al Arab, 10-1 Target Line, Clod Hopper, Its Grand. 17 runners.

2.00 SILVER BELL HANDICAP CHASE 2m 4f 110yds £5,090
401 1-11FFP WISE APPROACH (6) (D) K Bailey 8-12-0 S McNeill
402 PFPP-43 BISHOPS ISLAND (54) Miss H Knight 9-11-7 J F Titley
403 1R151-F MR FLANAGAN (14) C Brooks 9-11-7 G Bradley
404 131F1/3- CORRARDER (434) (D) J Old 11-11-0 Mr J S-Osborne
405 512142 PHILIP'S WOODY (18) (D) N Henderson 7-10-10 J R Kavanagh ★
406 255-36-4 LITTLE TOM (16) (D) J King 10-10-7 G Upton
407 5F431-P LANDSKER MISSILE (14) M Pipe 6-10-6 D Bridgwater
408 132413- CHICHELL'S HURST (194) (D) Mrs P Sly 9-10-2 R Marley
TOP FORM TIPS: Philip's Woody 8, Mr Flanagan 7, Bishops Island 6.
Betting: 5-2 Mr Flanagan, 3-1 Bishops Island, 5-1 Philip's Woody, 6-1 Wise Approach, 8-1 Corrarder, Little Tom. 8 runners.

2.30 JOHN O'GAUNT MAIDEN CHASE 3m £2,832
501 3053-F5 AIRTRAK (14) N Henderson 6-11-2 J R Kavanagh
502 003-0 DRUMCULLEN (54) K Bailey 6-11-2 S McNeill
503 0-0P0-52 DUKE OF LANCASTER (26) Mrs J Pitman 6-11-2 W Marston
504 7080C-4 FRENCH MYLE (22) C Mann 7-11-2 J Railton
505 00/FP5- POND HOUSE (262) M Pipe 6-11-2 Jamie Evans
506 P0-5P WAR FLOWER (12) A Carroll 7-10-11 R Davis
TOP FORM TIPS: Duke Of Lancaster 8, Airtrak 6.
Betting: 5-11 Duke Of Lancaster, 4-1 Pond House, 5-1 Drumcullen, 6-1 Airtrak, 25-1 War Flower, 33-1 French Myle. 6 runners.

3.00 KNIGHTON NOVICES' HURDLE 2m £2,225
601 1 KARSHI (14) (D) Miss H Knight 5-11-5 J F Titley
602 1 MR BUREAUCRAT (26) (D) M Pipe 6-11-5 D Bridgwater
603 05-P BHAVNAGAR (19) B Ellison 4-10-12 B Harding (3)
604 BRIGHT NOVEMBER Mrs H Parrott 4-10-12 S Curran (3)
605 0 CHARLIESMEDARLIN (17) W Clay 4-10-12 J Lodder
606 4-20 CHILLY LAD (40) M Ryan 4-10-12 J Ryan ★
607 5-64 DIVERTIMIENTO (14) J Mackie 4-10-12 K Husband (3)
608 U- DJAIS (287) J Jenkins 6-10-12 G Bradley
609 3 HAZARD A GUESS (20) Mrs J Ramsden 5-10-12 R Garritty
610 P KINDAKOOLA (13) M Chapman 4-10-12 W Worthington
611 5- KINGDOM OF SHADES (280) A Turnell 5-10-12 P Carberry
612 00- MANNOON (238) W Clay 4-10-12 J Railton ★
613 2/- SIMPLY SUPERB (838) W Clay 5-10-12 P Carey (5)
614 SOMMERSBY Mrs N Macauley 4-10-12 S Wynne
615 42 STAR PERFORMER (40) (BF) Mrs M Reveley 4-10-12 P Niven
616 2- STYLISH BLAKE (295) R Hollinshead 6-10-12 N W Mardle (7)
617 0 WEEHEBY (14) M Barraclough 6-10-12 S McNeill
618 D-2 WILL I FLY (18) J Long 9-10-12 D Gallagher
619 JEMIMA PUDDLEDUCK A Streeter 4-10-7 T Eley
620 10- MISS OPTIMIST (232) D Nicholson 5-10-7 W Marston
TOP FORM TIPS: Mr Bureaucrat 8, Karshi 7, Kingdom Of Shades 6.
Betting: 5-2 Karshi, 3-1 Mr Bureaucrat, 6-1 Hazard A Guess, 8-1 Kingdom Of Shades, 10-1 Bright November, Star Performer, 12-1 Miss Optimist. 20 runners.

3.30 WALTHAM CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' HANDICAP HURDLE 4YO 2m £2,427
1 U-22212 MOST EQUAL (20) (D) (BF) M Pipe 5-12-0 O Burrows (5)
2 25/00-5 FLY BY NORTH (28) D Nicholson 7-11-13 X Aizpuru (5)
3 5510-3P BANANA COVE (40) W Clay 4-11-10 P Carey
4 16/400- VICEROY RULER (194) (D) J Jenkins 4-11-6 D Walsh
5 1-1421 SASSIVER (8) (6lb ex) (D) P Kelleway 5-11-6 A Bates ★
6 233-4F- GENERAL TONIC (336) D Gandolfo 8-11-5 Sophie Mitchell
7 FP3U-21 STEADFAST ELITE (6) (6lb ex) J O Neill 4-10-13 A Roche
8 321005 CHRIS'S GLEN (6) (D) J Bradley 6-10-8 Guy Lewis ★
9 013/-P0 RUN FAST FOR GOLD (18) Miss H Knight 8-10-4 G F Ryan
10 31F-0S SALISONG (9) (CD) John Whyte 6-10-4 C Rae
TOP FORM TIPS: Most Equal 8, Sassiver 7, Steadfast Elite 6.
Betting: 9-4 Most Equal, 3-1 Sassiver, 7-2 General Tonic, 8-1 Fly By North, 10-1 Steadfast Elite, 12-1 Viceroy Ruler. 10 runners.

Racing

Battle over Budget cut

Chris Hawkins

IT MAY seem ungrateful to cavil about the Chancellor's reduction in betting duty, but his 1 per cent concession, announced on Tuesday, could throw a spanner into the relatively harmonious new working relationship between bookmakers, the Levy Board and the British Horseracing Board.

"If only he had been more generous" is probably a cry heard throughout the land after every Budget, but if Kenneth Clarke had thought a little longer he might have been able to do something significant to alleviate the problems caused to betting and racing by the National Lottery.

His 1 per cent is too little too late, and how it is split is bound to cause friction. A 2 per cent reduction, or even 1½, would have allowed much more room for manouevre.

Passing on the full 1 per cent to punters to stimulate turnover, as the Betting Office Licensees' Association would like its members to do, would not suit racing, facing a serious shortfall in prize money due to declining Levy.

But if horseracing takes a slice, greyhound racing will want some, which will leave precious little for the bookmakers to pass on to the public.

BOLA will discuss its strategy at a council meeting tomorrow, but Tom Kelly, its director general, does not expect the serious talking to start until the New Year.

"The argument will be enrichment versus restoration," said Kelly. "Passing on the reduction to punters will do something to alleviate, but not cure, the bookmakers' problems — but racing will no doubt want enriching."

Tristram Ricketts, chief executive of the BHB, does not want a battle with bookmakers, but commented: "This government has been generous to us over the years and we are grateful, but we will have to argue forcibly for a proportion of the cut to go to racing."

Over a year ago the Levy Board came to an agreement with the bookmakers concerning their contributions until March 1997. It cannot be renegotiated and any additions will be purely voluntary on the bookmakers' part.

Coral's have opened their ante-post book on the King George VI Chase on Boxing Day. They have four joint-favourites at 5-1 in Barton, Bank, Merry Gale, One Man and Martha's Son.

Master Oats is a generous 7-1 chance, the reasoning behind this being that he may not be suited by the sharpish Kempton course unless there is plenty of give in the ground.

This would not seem to take account of how much he improved last season. His superiority was indisputable in the Cheltenham Gold Cup and to think in terms of his being just a good horse on soft ground is, I believe, erroneous and could prove costly to the bookmakers.

At Windsor this afternoon Silverfort Lad (1.40) looks nap material in the Woodside Novices Chase. Terry Casey's six-year-old was a 40,000gns purchase in the summer, having won a point-to-point and a hunter chase in Ireland.

He showed plenty of promise on his first run over here when second to Bertone at Cheltenham over two and a half miles. Today's extra half mile should suit him well.

Windsor runners and riders

12.40 Inculcate
1.10 Dancing Dancer
1.40 SILVERFORT LAD (nap)
2.10 Dear Do
2.40 Master Beveled
3.10 Man Mood
3.40 Jenzsoph

12.40 OAKLEY GREEN NOVICES' HURDLE (DIV I) 2m £2,303
1 562-421 TIGHT FIST (17) Miss H Knight 5-11-7 J Osborne
2 4 ART TATUM (7) R Hannon 4-11-0 G McCourt
3 0 CHILI HEIGHTS (14) G Balding 5-11-0 B Clifford ★
4 2320-02 INCULCATE (14) C Weedon 4-11-0 Peter Hobbs
5 34/P055- INTENTION (352) P Hedger 5-11-0 M Richards
6 5 JAAZIM (19) M Madgwick 5-11-0 D Morris
7 P4-P0 RED CHANNEL (15) T Casey 5-11-0 S Murphy
8 SERIOUS OPTION P Cole 4-11-0 B Powell
9 534-4 TEINEIN (14) (BF) T Forster 4-11-0 A P McCoy
10 00/- THE MEXICANS GONE (596) D Geraghty 7-11-0 R Supple
11 3100/2-- WHISTLING BUCK (604) R Rowe 7-11-0 D O'Sullivan
12 OPENING RANGE N Berry 4-10-9 A S Smith
TOP FORM TIPS: Inculcate 8, Teinein 7, Tight Fist 6.
Betting: 9-4 Inculcate, 4-1 Tight Fist, 5-1 Teinein, 8-1 Art Tatum, 12-1 Chili Heights, Whistling Buck, Serious Option. 12 runners.

1.10 PANGBOURNE HANDICAP HURDLE 2m 4f £2,138
1 16114/- PADDYSWAY (923) R Buckler 8-11-13 B Powell
2 41F04-5 DOMINE (20) K Bailey 7-11-12 J Osborne
3 21/- DARZEE (587) P Hedger 5-11-10 M Richards
4 126-414 STAPLEFORD LADY (26) (BF) J Moore 7-11-6 W McFarland
5 1-80 NEVEROLD (29) M Ahern 5-11-0 M Ahern
6 3/2323-P WILTOSKI (10) (D) R Ledger 7-10-13 Mrs N Ledger ★
7 3P40-00 LEESWOOD (10) R Lee 7-10-11 M Dwyer ★
8 220600- CHALLENGER ROW (241) Mrs L Jewell 5-10-9 M A Fitzgerald
9 608440- RAMALLAH (227) (D) J White 6-10-8 A P McCoy
10 555/2/- SMART REBAL (1133) J Akehurst 7-10-7 J Leech
11 4300-02 DANCING DANCER (14) D Geraghty 6-10-4 R Supple
12 05046-0 MY SISTER LUCY (19) Miss K Whitehouse 5-10-0 W Humphreys
13 052/-045 SANDRO (16) Miss L Bower 6-10-0 L Harvey ★
14 P0P- JUST A BEAU (254) Mrs L Jewell 4-10-0 W Walsh (7)
TOP FORM TIPS: Stapleford Lady 8, Dancing Dancer 7, Domine 6.
Betting: 2-1 Domine, 5-1 Stapleford Lady, 6-1 Darzee, 8-1 Paddysway, Leeswood, 10-1 Dancing Dancer, Ramallah. 14 runners.

1.40 WOODSIDE NOVICES' CHASE 3m £2,111
1 U01-151 SEOD RIOGA (18) S Mellor 8-11-12 Chris Webb (5)
2 P0043/-1 PEATSWOOD (17) M Channon 7-11-6 A Thornton
3 0001-2 SILVERFORT LAD (19) T Casey 6-11-4 M A Fitzgerald
4 01P54-P ALFION (6) C Weedon 6-11-0 Peter Hobbs
5 UPP000- BRINDLEY HOUSE (237) J White 8-11-0 D Morris
6 P256P-4 CHIEF CELT (81) J King 8-11-0 A P McCoy
7 005/7-2 CHURCH LAW (14) Mrs L Taylor 8-11-0 R Supple
8 00- DUSKY ROVER (207) Miss H Knight 6-11-0 Mr J Culloty (7)
9 11212P- GOING AROUND (232) K Bailey 7-11-0 J Osborne
10 00/- LETS RUMBLE (686) R Alner 6-11-0 Mr P Henley (5)
11 06/5F45- NIGHT FANCY (252) Mrs A Woodrow 7-11-0 A Tory
12 212426 SENSITIVE KING (19) J Jenkins 7-11-0 D O'Sullivan
13 00/6/- MISS TAL (632) W Bethell 9-11-0 A S Smith
14 P35/-632 GRAND APPLAUSE (7) M Muggeridge 5-10-12 doubtful
15 4F22P-P SEABAMACAMILE (15) R Buckler 6-10-9 B Powell
TOP FORM TIPS: Seod Rioga 8, Silverfort Lad 7, Peatswood 6.
Betting: 3-1 Seod Rioga, 7-2 Silverfort Lad, 5-1 Peatswood, 6-1 Going Around, 10-1 Church Law, 12-1 Sensitive King, Night Fancy. 14 runners.

★ Denotes blinkers. Going: Good (Chase); Good to soft (Hurdles)

2.10 BOO STOY HAYWARD HANDICAP CHASE 2m £3,527
1 630-111 SEZ-AWAY (118) (D) T Forster 6-12-0 A P McCoy
2 13F332-- TUDOR FABLE (548) (D) N Henderson 7-11-3 J Osborne
3 112UU3 SHIRLEY'S TRAIN (17) (BF) P Hobbs 6-11-3 Peter Hobbs
4 106230 ILEWIN (13) (CD) M Ahern 8-11-2 M Ahern
5 34-0622 DRIVING FORCE (8) (CD) Mrs M McCourt 9-11-2 G McCourt ★
6 221-322 DEAR DO (16) (D) (BF) N Henderson 8-10-11 M A Fitzgerald
7 12684U FRANKUS (8) (D) S Mellor 6-10-5 Chris Webb (5)
8 215F4P- PEGMARINE (194) (D) Mrs A Woodrow 12-10-4 A Thornton
TOP FORM TIPS: Sez-Away 10, Driving Force 8, Shirley's Train 6.
Betting: 7-4 Sez-Away, 4-1 Shirley's Train, 5-1 Driving Force, 6-1 Dear Do, 8-1 Tudor Fable, Frankus, 10-1 Ilewin. 8 runners.

2.40 OAKLEY GREEN NOVICES' HURDLE (DIV II) 2m £2,303
1 5/-1 MASTER BEVELED (20) (D) P Evans 5-11-7 A P McCoy
2 50 ANDRE'S AFFAIR (14) D French Davis 4-11-0 I Lawrence
3 PP BAY BOB (18) T Casey 6-11-0 S Murphy
4 4/26-P BIETSCHHORN BARD (20) D Gandolfo 5-11-0 M Dwyer
5 PP/0P0-6 KINGS GOLD (19) Mrs L Richards 5-11-0 M Richards
6 0 MONSIEUR BROOKS (15) R Stronge 5-11-0 R Stronge
7 P- NEW ALBION (280) N Henderson 4-11-0 M A Fitzgerald
8 03600-4 NIGHT IN A MILLION (18) S Woodman 4-11-0 A Thornton
9 0 STARLIGHT FLYER (12) J Long 6-11-0 B Rowell ★
10 WOTTASHAMBLES L Montague Hall 4-11-0 D Morris
11 F LADY LACEY (14) G Balding 8-10-9 B Fenton (5)
12 U PRIDE OF HAYLING (7) P Hedger 4-10-9 B Powell
TOP FORM TIPS: Master Beveled 9, Night In A Million 7.
Betting: 5-4 Master Beveled, 7-1 Lady Lacey, Night In A Million, 8-1 New Albion, King s Gold, 10-1 Andre's Affair. 12 runners.

3.10 DORNEY AMATEUR RIDERS' HANDICAP CHASE 2m 5f £2,997
1 111/50-5 KILLESHIN (8) H Manners 9-12-0 A C-Jones (7)
2 1P404-1 ASK THE GOVERNOR (84) G Balding 9-11-1 A Balding (7)
3 1-31101 MAN MOOD (15) C Brooks 4-11-1 E James (7)
4 50305-1 RAMSTAR (22) P Hobbs 7-10-6 S Mulcaire (7)
5 413211/- ROYAL SQUARE (540) G Harwood 9-10-6 Mrs A Perrett (3)
6 052111- GLEN MIRAGE (185) (D) M Coombe 10-10-0 Miss M Coombe (7)
TOP FORM TIPS: Man Mood 8, Ramstar 7, Ask The Governor 6.
Betting: 6-4 Man Mood, 3-1 Ask The Governor, 7-2 Ramstar, 8-1 Glen Mirage, Royal Square, 16-1 Killeshin. 6 runners.

3.40 CRANBOURNE MARES' ONLY HANDICAP HURDLE 2m £2,981
1 66013-F JENZSOPH (16) P Hobbs 4-11-11 Peter Hobbs
2 1121UF ZAJIRA (9) P Eccles 5-11-11 A P McCoy
3 00412-4 JOSIFINA (22) M McCormack 4-11-4 I Lawrence
4 611665- SMART IN SABLE (222) P Hedger 8-11-2 M Richards ★
5 13022-0 SOPHIE MAY (12) G L Moore 4-11-1 A Thornton
6 12/124-3 FORGETFUL (29) (D) D Burchell 8-11-1 D J Burchell
7 54/6PP- MRS JAWLEYFORD (264) (D) C Smith 7-10-12 M Ranger
TOP FORM TIPS: Josifina 8, Jenzsoph 7, Forgetful 6.
Betting: 9-4 Jenzsoph, 4-1 Zajira, 9-2 Josifina, 5-1 Forgetful, 6-1 Smart In Sable, 8-1 Sophie May, 20-1 Mrs Jawleyford. 7 runners.

Lingfield (All-weather Flat)

12.15 Moujeeb
12.45 Speedy Classic
1.15 Kalar
1.45 Red Acuisle
2.15 Sweet Wilhelmina
2.45 Chita Rivera
3.15 Vladivostock
3.45 Knotally Wood

Draw: Low numbers favoured. ★ Denotes blinkers. Going: Standard

12.15 FAUCETS SOLD A GROHE MILLION HANDICAP (DIV I) 6f £2,414
1 6-00000 CABCHARGE BLUE (14) (CD) T Naughton 3-8-13 T Ashley (7) 7
2 000220 MOUJEEB (6) (CD) Pat Mitchell 5-8-12 J Quinn 5★
3 020311 SOUTHERN DOMINION (5) (7lb ex) (CD) M Johnston 3-8-12 L Dettori 2
4 000035 SLIVOVITZ (22) (D) M Heaton-Ellis 5-8-8 A Clark 6★
5 520200 HALBERT (60) (BF) P Burgoyne 6-8-3 D McCabe (3) 1★
6 210000 GREENPS BID (14) (C) (D) D Chapman 5-8-2 A Culhane 3
7 534125 SHARP IMP (92) (D) R Flower 5-8-1 D Biggs 9★
8 000042 STAND TALL (6) C Thornton 3-8-13 D McKeown 4
9 000000 GREEN GOLIGHTLY (9) (D) D Wilson 4-8-11 G Carter 10
10 000000 SAINT AMIGO (10) (C) J Eyre 3-8-7 R Lappin 13★
11 000-0 SERIOUS FACT (31) M Prescott 3-8-7 G Duffield 14
12 005500 LA BOSSETTE (20) R Ingram 3-8-4 A Mackay 8
13 00-00 HENRY WESTON (136) P Howling 3-8-3 D Wright (3) 11
14 0-00800 SARASONIA (5) J Payne 4-7-7 N Varley (3) 12★
TOP FORM TIPS: Southern Dominion 8, Stand Tall 7, Moujeeb 6.
Betting: 3-1 Stand Tall, 4-1 Southern Dominion, 5-1 Slivovitz, Serious Fact, Sharp Imp, 8-1 Halbert, Moujeeb. 14 runners.

12.45 FAUCETS GROHE RELAXA PLUS ESQUISIT SHOWER FITTINGS HANDICAP (DIV I) 6f £2,656
1 440642 SPEEDY CLASSIC (26) (CD) M Heaton-Ellis 6-8-10 A Clark 8
2 361000 WINDRUSH BOY (28) (D) J Bosley 5-8-7 Aimee Cook (7) 4
3 044034 TEE-EMM (20) (CD) P Howling 5-8-3 J Quinn 2
4 550080 LOCHON (45) (D) J Eyre 4-8-1 R Lappin 6
5 020002 SPECTACLE JIM (20) J O'Donoghue 6-8-11 P McCabe (3) 7★
6 004010 ANYTIME BABY (10) (CD) P Dalton 3-8-11 R Cochrane 1
7 045216 CHEEKY CHAPPY (93) (D) D Chapman 4-7-10 P Fessey (5) 8★
8 000000 IL FURETTO (22) J King 3-7-7 N Varley (3) 5
TOP FORM TIPS: Speedy Classic 8, Spectacle Jim 7, Cheeky Chappy 6.
Betting: 11-4 Spectacle Jim, 3-1 Speedy Classic, 7-2 Anytime Baby, 4-1 Tee-Emm, 6-1 Cheeky Chappy, 10-1 Lochon. 8 runners.

1.15 FAUCETS GROHE RELAXA PLUS ESQUISIT SHOWER FITTINGS HANDICAP (DIV II) 6f £2,656
1 000000 NORDICO PRINCESS (24) (CD) M Brittain 4-10-0 R Cochrane 2
2 540520 KALAR (14) (CD) D Chapman 6-9-13 L Dettori 7★
3 356003 ROCKY TWO (20) (D) P Howling 4-8-11 J Quinn 6★
4 505503 HALF TONE (62) (D) R Flower 3-8-11 D Biggs 1★
5 500085 DAANIERA (20) (CD) P Howling 5-8-7 D Wright (3) 5★
6 034003 NEWINGTON BUTTS (10) K McAuliffe 5-8-3 G Duffield 4
7 162060 TOMMY TEMPEST (87) (CD) R Peacock 6-8-1 A Mackay 3★
8 000-00 DIAMOND BANGLE (9) C Elsey 3-7-7 N Adams 8
TOP FORM TIPS: Half Tone 8, Kalar 7, Rocky Two 6.
Betting: 5-4 Half Tone, 5-2 Rocky Two, 7-2 Kalar, 4-1 Daaniera, 5-1 Newington Butts, 16-1 Nordico Princess. 8 runners.

1.45 FAUCETS HOSPITA LEVER TAPS OLD & NEW MAIDEN STAKES 2YO 6f £3,404
1 63 BALLYMONEY (10) (BF) W O'Gorman 9-0 Emma O'Gorman 9
2 06 BLUE FLYER (63) R Ingram 9-0 D Biggs 7
3 00 CASINO CHIP (22) T Clement 9-0 G Faulkner (7) 3
4 650022 RED ACUISLE (14) G Lewis 9-0 S Whitworth 11
5 50 ROWLANDSONS STUD (129) G L Moore 9-0 R Perham 6
6 6 GREEN GEM (IRE) (30) S Williams 8-9 J Tate 2
7 LA PERRUCHE Lord Huntingdon 8-9 D McKeown 10
8 043000 LATZIO (47) B Pearce 8-9 D McCabe (3) 4
9 543 MARINO STREET (75) P Evans 8-9 S Sanders 9
10 4222 MASK FLOWER (6) M Johnston 8-9 L Dettori 5
11 00 UNSPOKEN PRAYER (83) J Arnold 8-9 C Rutter 1
TOP FORM TIPS: Mask Flower 8, Red Acuisle 7, Marino Street 6.
Betting: 11-4 Mask Flower, 3-1 Ballymoney, 4-1 Marino Street, 9-2 Red Acuisle, 5-1 La Perruche, 7-1 Blue Flyer, Green Gem. 11 runners.

2.15 FAUCETS GROHE AUTOMATIC 1000 & 2000 THERMOSTATIC SHOWER VALVES NURSERY HANDICAP 2YO 1m £2,460
1 101012 QUALITY (10) (CD) W O'Gorman 9-7 Emma O'Gorman 1★
2 01 SWEET WILHELMINA (19) Lord Huntingdon 8-8 L Dettori 6
3 151035 HOMELAND (6) (D) T Naughton 8-6 S Sanders 4
4 305040 BALPARE (15) N Callaghan 7-8 A Mackay 2
5 000012 DRAGONJOY (6) J Payne 7-7 D Wright (3) 7★
6 00000 EFFICACIOUS (40) C Benstead 7-7 J Quinn 3
7 450 DEAKEN DANCER (20) K Ivory 7-7 G Bardwell 5
TOP FORM TIPS: Sweet Wilhelmina 8, Quality 7.
Betting: 2-1 Sweet Wilhelmina, 9-4 Quality, 4-1 Homeland, 5-1 Dragonjoy, 12-1 Balpare, 50-1 Efficacious, 66-1 Deaken Dancer. 7 runners.

2.45 FAUCETS FOR GROHMASTER SHOWERS LIMITED STAKES 2m £2,726
1 448245 ENVIRONMENTALIST (19) R Harris 4-9-4 A Mackay 1
2 0-08002 CHITA RIVERA (24) P Makin 4-8-13 L Dettori 5
3 005/000- FLEUR DE TAL (542) W Turner 4-8-13 R Perham 7
4 140030 DODDINGTON FLYER (22) P Hollinshead 3-8-9 R Cochrane 2
5 320530 GUEST ALLIANCE (20) A Moore 3-8-9 Candy Morris 4
6 080 ZADOK (20) R Phillips 3-8-3 G Duffield 9
7 122360 HEVER GOLF LADY (22) (CD) T Naughton 3-8-6 S Sanders 8
8 405026 ENDLESS FANTASY (25) C Cyzer 3-8-4 D Biggs 6
9 0-65000 SHINING DANCER (20) S Dow 3-6-4 A Daly (7) 3
TOP FORM TIPS: Chita Rivera 8, Environmentalist 7, Hever Golf Lady 6.
Betting: 3-1 Environmentalist, 7-2 Endless Fantasy, 9-2 Hever Golf Lady, Chita Rivera, 5-1 Guest Alliance, 8-1 Doddington Flyer, 12-1 Fleur De Tal. 9 runners.

3.15 FAUCETS SOLD A GROHE MILLION HANDICAP (DIV II) 6f £2,414
1 085553 DON'T GET CAUGHT (16) J L Harris 3-10-2 S Sanders 7★
2 001606 LIFT BOY (26) (C) (D) A Moore 6-9-12 Candy Morris 5
3 002484 OUR SHADEE (20) (CD) K Ivory 5-9-11 C Scally (7) 13★
4 0-00580 FASCINATION WALTZ (10) (CD) J Sheehan 8-9-10 G Duffield 8
5 202308 RING THE CHIEF (96) M Usher 3-9-5 M Wigham 2
6 000000 DISTANT DYNASTY (107) (CD) B Pearce 5-9-8 T Ives 12
7 400504 ASSIGNMENT (136) (CD) J Long 9-9-4 R Cochrane 1
8 122100 COLSTON-C (60) (D) C Hill 3-9-4 S Whitworth 10
9 332360 KIRA (10) J Eyre 5-9-4 R Lappin 6
10 306550 TOMAL (36) R Ingram 3-9-0 D Biggs 3★
11 00-0032 VLADIVOSTOK (6) B de Haan 5-8-13 P Fessey (5) 11
12 040400 MYJINKA (22) (CD) J O'Donoghue 5-8-8 P McCabe (3) 9★
13 060006 BONNY MELODY (20) P Evans 4-8-6 Amanda Sanders (7) 4
TOP FORM TIPS: Vladivostock 8, Don't Get Caught 7, Our Shadee 6.
Betting: 9-2 Don't Get Caught, 5-1 Our Shadee, 6-1 Vladivostok, Tomal, 7-1 Lift Boy, Ring The Chief. 13 runners.

3.45 FAUCETS FOR GROHE ARABESK & CHIARA HANDICAP Amateurs 1m 4f £2,427
1 453306 TETHYS (28) (D) J Eyre 4-11-7 Diane Jones 3
2 026 FIGHTING TIMES (27) C Smith 3-10-8 Miss J Winter 9
3 660532 KNOTALLY WOOD (19) J Hills 3-10-4 Miss E Johnson Houghton 5
4 600212 NO SPEECHES (9) (C) (BF) S Dow 4-10-2 T McCarthy 6
5 354-300 RETENDER (24) (D) J Pearce 6-9-13 Mrs L Pearce 4
6 306435 MONTONE (9) J Jenkins 5-9-9 M Marsh (4) 10
7 165404 STRAT'S LEGACY (20) (CD) D Arbuthnot 8-9-2 Mrs D Arbuthnot 8
8 800000 MUTUHIQUE (8) B Pearce 4-9-0 Mrs S Colville (7) 7
9 231500 DON'T DROP BOMBS (20) (CD) D Thom 6-9-0 Miss J Feilden 2★
10 /7-6008 PHAHAN (6) (C) (D) R Peacock 9-9-0 Mrs C Peacock (7) 1
TOP FORM TIPS: No Speeches 8, Knotally Wood 7, Don't Drop Bombs 6.
Betting: 11-4 No Speeches, 3-1 Strat's Legacy, 7-2 Knotally Wood, 5-1 Fighting Times, Tethys, 10-1 Don't Drop Bombs, 12-1 Montone. 10 runners.

● Blinkered today for the first time: LEICESTER: 3.00 Chilly Lad. LINGFIELD: 12.15 Sarasonia; 3.15 Don't Get Caught.

Results

CATTERICK

1.00 (2m 3f Hdle): 1, DESERT FIGHTER, M Harrington (9-4 fav); 2, Able Player (5-2); 3, Fly To The End (8-2). 8 ran. 12, 8. (Mrs M Reveley) Tote: £3.20; £1.30, £2.10. Dual F: £3.20. CSF: £8.13.

1.30 (2m Hdle): 1, WISDOM, A S Smith (8-1); 2, In Good Faith (6-1); 3, Daily Boy (50-1). 11-8 fav Eden Dancer. 21 ran. 2½, 5. (K Morgan) Tote: £10.80; £2.40, £1.90, £13.00. Dual F: £32.90. CSF: £51.31.

2.00 (2m Ch): 1, FLASH OF REALM, G Cahill (evens fav); 2, Evening Rain (4-1); 3, North Pride (14-1). 6 ran. 7, 2½. (P Monteith) Tote: £2.00; £1.10, £3.50. Dual F: £4.40. CSF: £5.30.

2.30 (2m Hdle): 1, KIMBERLEY BOY, P Niven (5-1); 2, Brackenthwaite (5-1); 3, Deep Dawn (4-1). 7-2 fav Exclusion. 13 ran. Hd, nk. (Mrs M Reveley) Tote: £6.10; £2.90, £1.40, £8.80. Dual F: £10.40. CSF: £31.99. Tricast: £318.38. Trio: £43.00.

3.00 (3m 1f 110yds Ch): 1, TWIN STATES, M Dwyer (11-2); 2, Stop The Waller (4-1); 3, Andros Prince (16-1). 7-2 fav Westwell Boy. 11 ran. 1½, 9. (J Turner) Tote: £8.90; £2.10, £2.70, £2.60. Dual F: £21.30. CSF: £26.78. Tricast: £307.25.

3.30 (2m Hdle): 1, BROAD OUTLOOK, G Harker (50-1); 2, Marsden Rock (4-7 fav); 3, Belle Rose (3-1). 10 ran. 4, 15. (M Smith) Tote: £52.00; £5.10, £1.60, £1.80. Dual F: £25.80. CSF: £79.38. Trio: £30.30.

QUADPOT: £7.00. PLACEPOT: £120.60.

HEREFORD

12.50 (2m 3f 110yds Hdle): 1, BUTTERCUP JOE, W Marston (5-2 jt fav); 2, Mr Kermit (50-1); 3, Hardy Weather (33-1). 5-2 jt fav Three Philosophers. 16 ran. 5, 15. (D Nicholson) Tote: £3.40; £1.60, £10.20, £4.30. Dual F: £239.80. CSF: £102.33.

1.20 (2m 3f Ch): 1, HURRYUP, R Dunwoody (9-1); 2, Crafty Chaplain (5-1); 3, Cyrill Henry (7-2). 11-8 fav Fair Brother. 6 ran. 3, dist. (R Dickin) Tote: £10.50; £2.50, £1.80. Dual F: £15.00. CSF: £46.31.

1.50 (2m 1f Hdle): 1, MO-JOE, B Fenton (6-1); 2, Latin Leader (9-1); 3, Dontdressfordinner (7-1). 7-2 fav Slip A Coin. 15 ran. 3, 6. (G Yardley) Tote: £7.20; £2.10, £4.40, £4.00. Dual F: £28.80. CSF: £52.69.

2.20 (2m 3f Ch): 1, BRAES OF MAR, M A Fitzgerald (6-4); 2, Grand Hat (7-1); 3, Darleyfordbay (20-1). 5-8 fav Lemon's Mill. 5 ran. 4, dist. (N Henderson) Tote: £2.50; £1.80, £2.40. DF: £5.90. CSF: £11.26.

2.50 (2m 1f Hdle): 1, CAWARRA BOY, Mr E James (3-1); 2, Prairie Grove (10-1); 3, Valiaky (5-2 fav); 4, Hullo Mary Doll (16-1). 16 ran. 1½, 1½. (C James) Tote: £4.90; £1.30, £3.50, £1.60, £2.60. Dual F: £36.80. CSF: £33.98. Tricast: £83.49. Trio: £27.50.

3.20 (3m 1f 110yds Ch): 1, CANTORIS FRATER, W Marston (6-1); 2, Highway Five (25-1); 3, Three of Clubs (20-1). 7-4 fav Celtic Silver. 11 ran. 15, 10. (Mrs J Pitman) Tote: £6.50; £1.90, £6.40, £4.50. Dual F: £87.90. CSF: £153.33. Tricast: £3,498.38.

3.50 (2m 1f): 1, BADGER'S LANE, R Dunwoody (5-1); 2, Harlequin Chorus (10-1); 3, Bramley May (9-1). 11-4f Golden Drum. 17 ran. 1, nk. (K Bailey) Tote: £6.30; £2.80, £3.00, £5.50. DF: £83.50. CSF: £57.93.

JACKPOT: Not won; £2,507.53 carried forward to Leicester today.

QUADPOT: Not won. PLACEPOT: £445.80.

LINGFIELD

12.10 (7f): 1, PEGGY SPENCER, D McKeown (8-11 fav); 2, Scissor Ridge (16-1); 3, Yo Kiri-B (33-1). 10 ran. 3½, nk. (C Thornton) Tote: £1.90; £1.40, £2.30, £4.60. Dual F: £13.30. CSF: £13.81. NR: Dalcross.

12.40 (1m): 1, EASY CHOICE, A Clark (9-4 fav); 2, Kandh Homm (3-1). 3, Awasha (8-1). 7 ran. 1½, 1½. (P Mitchell) Tote: £3.30; £1.80, £1.80. Dual F: £3.40. CSF: £9.10. NR: Raffles Rooster.

1.10 (1m 4f): 1, BALLYNAKELLY, T Ashley (5-2 fav). 2, Just-Mana-Mou (10-1); 3, Hani (4-1). 14 ran. 10, hd. (R Akehurst) Tote: £6.10; £2.30, £2.50, £1.90. Dual F: £56.90. CSF: £31.37. Tricast: £101.73. Trio: £49.70. NR: Alpine Storm, Rose Chime.

1.40 (6f): 1, ARCTIC ROMANCER, A Whelan (4-1); 2, Moi Canard (15-2); 3, Rakeltheposs (13-8 fav). 7 ran. 2½, 1½. (G Lewis) Tote: £6.90; £1.80, £2.50. Dual F: £9.60. CSF: £31.41.

2.10 (1m): 1, MR NEVERMIND, S Whitworth (6-4 jt fav); 2, Nordic Doll (7-1); 3, Romandi Son (25-1). 6-4 jt fav Light Fantastic. 7 ran. 5, 6. (G L Moore) Tote: £1.60; £1.40, £3.30. Dual F: £7.10. CSF: £11.97. NR: Anzio.

2.40 (2m): 1, COLERIDGE, J Quinn (2-1 fav); 2, Mirosowski (100-30); 3, Supremo Star (5-2). 9 ran. ½, 11. (J Sheehan) Tote: £2.20; £1.50, £2.90, £1.10. Dual F: £5.40. CSF: £9.56. Tricast: £16.37. Trio: £11.60.

3.10 (7f): 1, TUIGAMALA, T Ashley (33-1); 2, Apollo Red (4-1); 3, Fort Knox (7-2). 11-4 fav By The Bay. 11 ran. ½, 5. (R Ingram) Tote: £40.30; £6.60, £1.70, £1.70. Dual F: £124.60. CSF: £161.08. Trio: £83.30.

3.40 (7f): 1, SUPERGO, A Culhane (5-1); 2, Four of Spades (14-1); 3, Mediate (16-1). 7-2 fav Field of Vision. 15 ran. Shd, nk. (Mrs P Sly) Tote: £6.00; £1.30, £7.60, £6.60. Dual F: £51.80. CSF: £73.56.

QUADPOT: £12.40. PLACEPOT: £22.60.

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Soccer

Rovers pair are hit by Euro bans

Ian Ross

UEFA performed an unexpected U-turn yesterday by announcing that it was, after all, punishing Blackburn Rovers' David Batty and Graeme Le Saux for their punch-up in Moscow.

Forty-eight hours after insisting that the pair would escape admonishment, Uefa informed the English champions that both players had been suspended for two European games.

On Monday, Uefa said the brawl in Blackburn's Champions' League tie against Spartak Moscow had not featured in either the match referee's or match supervisor's official reports.

Yesterday, however, European football's governing body was adamant it had received a detailed account of an ugly incident captured by television cameras.

Although it is perhaps significant that the investigation was reopened within hours of Blackburn announcing that they had fined both men, it is likely that a third, fair-play report — submitted by a Uefa observer — was behind yesterday's decision.

"The players have been suspended for grossly unsporting conduct," said a Uefa spokesman. "Earlier we simply did not have sufficient evidence to reach a definitive decision on the matter. But more information has come to light over the past 24 hours or so, and it was decided firm and positive action was required.

"Members of Uefa's control and disciplinary committee discussed the relevant evidence by telephone. They did so because it was important that a decision was reached as quickly as possible."

Uefa's action came "as a bit of a shock to the club", said Blackburn's chairman Robert Coar. "But it is something we shall have to accept."

With the bans taking immediate effect, Le Saux and Batty will miss next Wednesday's final Champions' League fixture against Rosenborg at Ewood Park and the opening game of Rovers' next European campaign.

The two England internationals will be disappointed to learn that this may not be the end of the matter. Uefa's control and disciplinary committee will meet early next year and a spokesman said: "It is possible the affair will be reopened and that the possibility of a financial penalty will then be discussed."

Gascoigne on carpet today

Patrick Glenn on the charges facing the Ibrox Four

THE Ibrox Four — Paul Gascoigne, Alan McLaren, John Brown and Billy Dodds — appear before the Scottish FA's disciplinary committee with three other players today on a variety of charges that carry heavy sentences.

Gascoigne, cited for a series of offences in the game against Aberdeen at Ibrox on November 11, may be held to have brought the game into disrepute. McLaren, Brown and Dodds are also carpeted for incidents in that match.

Sean Sweeney of Airdrie is alleged to have kicked Dundee's Morten Wieghorst in a Coca-Cola Cup semi-final; Alan Lawrence of Hearts is said to have elbowed Rangers' Craig Moore; and the Dumbarton goalkeeper Ian McFarlane was twice dismissed for assaulting opponents in recent games.

Rangers' argument that none of the Ibrox quartet should be disciplined because the referee took no action against them is unlikely to find a sympathetic ear. Although the match official John Rowbotham missed the mayhem, the alleged offences were reported by his supervisor Don McVicar.

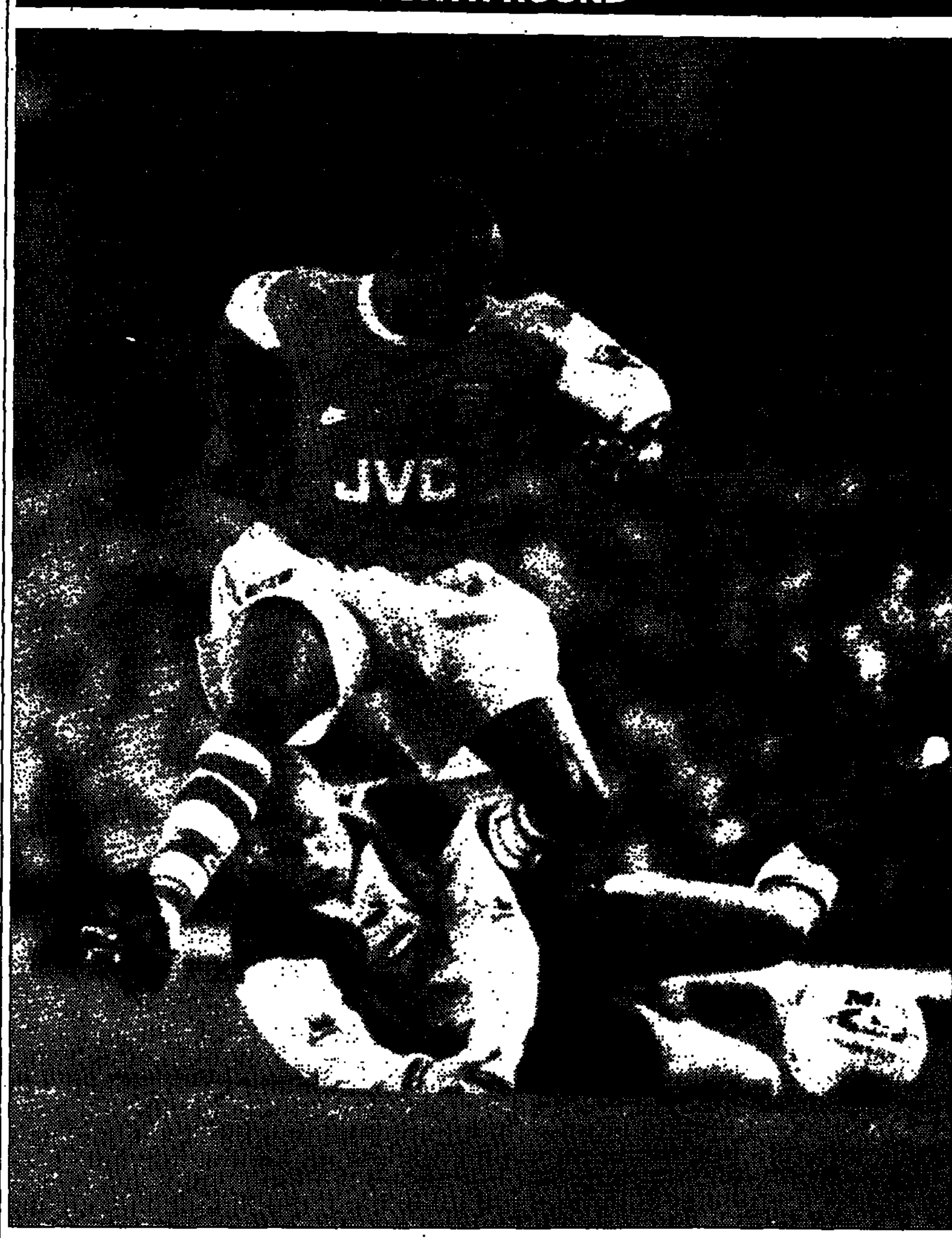
In exceptional cases the SFA takes evidence from any source, and there are many precedents. Duncan Ferguson received a 12-match suspension for butting an opponent even though the referee failed to take action against him.

Graeme Souness ran up a sequence of touchline bans when he managed Rangers, having been reported by a referees' supervisor and, improbably, a security officer at Ibrox. A few years ago John Robertson of Hearts was suspended for punching Celtic's Tommy Burns when the referee's gaze was averted, as was Colin O'Neill of Motherwell for the same offence against Celtic's Peter Grant.

Even when action has been taken by referees, the SFA can extend punishment. The Hearts players Graeme Hogg and Craig Levein, sent off for fighting during a friendly with Raith Rovers, collected automatic one-match bans which were extended to 10 by the disciplinary committee.

For Gascoigne and the others, the range of possible sentences makes their fate impossible to predict.

COCA-COLA CUP: FOURTH ROUND



With one bound . . . Wright gets clear at Highbury, where Arsenal executed another escape against Wednesday FRANK BARON

Arsenal 2, Sheffield Wednesday 1

Hartson turns on the usual recovery

Martin Thorpe

JOHN HARTSON scored the goal that knocked his former Luton manager David Pleat's side out of the Coca-Cola Cup last night, to round off an evening of Arsenal domination against a side who have still to beat the Gunners in this competition.

Wednesday's visit to Highbury in the Premiership eight days earlier had produced a thriller, with Arsenal pulling back from 2–1 down to win 4–2. Last night's game picked up the pulse as Wednesday again took an early lead.

On 17 minutes Waddle floated a typically perceptive ball in to Whittingham in the area. The striker's nod-on was punched away by Seaman but only to the feet of Degryse 14 yards out, from where the Belgian international lashed the ball through a crowd of players into the net.

It was a goal which came against the run of play. Three minutes earlier Platt had hammered a full-blooded shot from about eight yards and Pressman kept it out with a stunning one-handed save. A minute later Wright shot wastefully over from about six yards.

After Wednesday's goal, too, normal service was resumed as Pressman saved with his knees from Merson and Jensen wasted a dangerous position about six yards out.

But six minutes before half-time Arsenal got their reward when Wright's flick-on by the penalty spot put Merson through and Watts brought him down. Wright converted the penalty for the 250th goal of his career.

Arsenal's attacking intentions had been clear from the start, with Bruce Rioch opting for the first time to play two central strikers, Hartson and Wright, with Bergkamp cool and classy in his withdrawn position in midfield.

Hartson, Wright's replacement during his suspension, had done enough in the three games to retain his place, and on 60 minutes he rewarded Rioch's faith. Not for the first time the red-headed Welshman showed a neat turn of body and speed to leave Nolan standing. He nipped round Watts on a 20-yard run into the area that ended with an explosive shot past Pressman.

Arsenal: Seaman; Dixon, Bould, Adams, Winterburn, Merson, Platt, Jensen, Bergkamp, Hartson, Wright.
Sheffield Wednesday: Pressman; Nolan, Watts, Atherton, Walker, Sinton, Waddle, Hyde, Degryse, Whittingham, Bright.
Referee: K Burge (Tonypandy).

Leeds United 2, Blackburn Rovers 1

Brolin leads celebration

Cynthia Bateman

BLOND Swedes have always been considered hot stuff, and Leeds's new signing promises to be no exception. Tomas Brolin, the Swedish international striker signed from Parma for £4.5 million, had a birthday in more ways than one in his first full match at Elland Road.

He was not on the score sheet but after a slow start began to combine with McAllister to produce the best football in Leeds's win. The nickname Strollin' Brolin cannot be long off.

Twenty-six yesterday, Brolin at first seemed superfluous to requirements as Leeds went ahead in the first half through Deane and Yeboah.

After 10 minutes Brolin produced an artful dummy, allowing the ball to run to Deane who knocked it back for the Swede to hit a superb volley that spun narrowly wide. Blackburn had a chance even earlier when the ball was deflected into the path of Newell, who incredibly missed from all of six yards.

Thereafter Blackburn's misery only deepened as Palmer and Wetherall did an excellent job in the centre of defence. Normally one would expect to be complimentary about Blackburn's Hendry, but after 20 minutes, as Kelly's long diagonal cross was knocked down by Wetherall, he was slow off the mark and allowed Deane to get in a powerful left-foot shot to put Leeds ahead.

Hendry tried to make amends but blasted his chance just high, although the effort was a good deal better than Shearer's sole strike of the first half which almost cleared the stand. Newell made an even bigger blunder a few minutes later, passing straight to Yeboah, who turned, advanced and hit a stunning drive from 25 yards to put Leeds two up just before the half-hour.

Blackburn, without the influential midfielder Bohinen who was also cup-tied, seemed, unlike on a recent occasion, to lack punch. And their goal in the 50th minute came courtesy of Kelly, who beat McKinlay to Ripley's low cross and turned it spectacularly into his own net.

But Leeds then remembered Brolin was on their side and he produced a wonderful move to release McAllister, whose chip shot beat Flowers but hit the bar.

Leeds United: Lukic, Kelly, Palmer, Wetherall, Dorigo, Deane, McAllister, Ford, Speed (Bowman, 75min), Brolin (Whelan, 78) Yeboah
Blackburn Rovers: Flowers; Kenna, Berg, Hendry, Le Saux, Ripley, McKinlay (Warhurst, 75), Sherwood, Batty, Newell (Sutton, 59), Shearer.
Referee: K Cooper (Pontypridd).

Wolverhampton 2, Coventry 1

Fine flourish of Ferguson

Stephen Bierley

A THOROUGHLY unhappy season which has seen Wolves lose their manager and their way was partially redeemed at Molineux when they reached the quarter-finals.

It might have been expected that a side near the bottom of the Premiership would be too strong for one near the foot of the First Division. But this match turned on the sending-off of Coventry's goalkeeper Ogrizovic. Wolves immediately capitalised with two goals in as many minutes.

A red rag to a bull is deemed a dangerous ploy; on this occasion this particular Bull was illegally prevented from doing what comes naturally and it was Ogrizovic who impotently raged at seeing red in front of his eyes.

The fun began for the home fans just before the half-hour. Prior to that Coventry had shown increasing signs that they might open up the Wolves defence at any minute.

All was to change in a trice. Ferguson, returning to the side after having been dropped for some considerable time, and playing in front of his father, Alex, set Bull thundering clear. Ogrizovic came to meet him outside the area and used his hands to prevent the Wolves striker taking the ball beyond him.

Mr Lodge duly sent Ogrizovic off and Coventry were doubly punished when Venus swept the free-kick beyond the substitute goalkeeper Gould. The latter just got a touch, which was more than he managed two minutes later.

Coventry, still trying to reorganise themselves, allowed Ferguson far too much time and space, albeit a long way out, and the former Manchester United midfielder defeated Gould with considerable aplomb. Molineux erupted.

Coventry's 10 men, with the indefatigable Strachan displaying the energy of two, pulled a goal back with a Williams header after 67 minutes.

Wolverhampton Wanderers: Stowell; Rankine, Thompson, Ferguson, Law, Richards, Venus, Goodman, Bull, Atkins, Birch.
Coventry City: Ogrizovic; Rennie, Richardson, Williams, Telfer, Pickering, Ndlovu, Dublin, Hall, Isaias, Strachan.
Referee: S Lodge (Barnsley).



Results

Soccer

COCA-COLA CUP
Fourth round

Arsenal (1) 2 — **Sheff Wed** (1) 1
Wright 39 (pen), Hartson 64 — Degryse 16. 35,361
Aston Villa (0) 1 — **QPR** (0) 0
Townsend 60. 34,951
Leeds (2) 2 — **Blackburn** (0) 1
Deane 21, Yeboah 29 — Kelly 51 (og). 26,006
Liverpool (0) 0 — **Newcastle** (0) 1
Watson 77. 40,077
Middlesbrough (0) 0 **Birmingham** (0) 0
28,031
Norwich (0) 0 — **Bolton** (0) 0
13,820
Wolverhampton (2) 2 — **Coventry** (0) 1
Venus 33, Ferguson 34 — Williams 67. 24,628

AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD
Second round
Northern Section
Crewe (0) 0 — **Burnley** (0) 1
Nogan 105. 2,596 (aet; 0–0 at 90min)
Southern Section
Swindon (0) 0 — **Hereford** (1) 1
White 45. 8,850

ICIS LEAGUE: Carlton Trophy: Second round: Postponed: Epsom & Ewell v Lewes — waterlogged pitch.
PONTINS LEAGUE: First Division: Tranmere 1, Man Utd 3. Second Division: Barnsley 2, Mansfield 0; Man C 0, York 0; Rotherham 2, Sunderland 2; Bradford C 2, Huddersfield 1. Third Division: Chester 2, Stockport 5, Chesterfield 4, Darlington 3; Walsall 5, Rochdale 5; Wigan 2, Scarborough 0: Postponed: Lincoln v Doncaster — waterlogged pitch.
AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First Division: Wimbledon 2, Oxford Utd 1; Southampton 2, Norwich 2. Second Division: Swansea 2, Birmingham 2.
SPRINGHEATH PRINT CAPITAL LEAGUE: Brentford 1, Barnet 0; Cambridge Utd 2, Wycombe 0: Colchester Utd 0, Fulham 2: Leyton Orient 2, Woking 0.
LEAGUE OF WALES CUP: Group Five: Round One: Ebbw Vale 1, Inter Cardiff 0.

Rugby Union

CIS INSURANCE SERIES TOUR MATCH: London & South East 32, Western Samoa 40.
CIS INSURANCE U-21 COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP: Midlands semi-final: East Midlands 11, Notts, Lincs & Derbyshire 3.
SRU U-21 INTER-DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIPS: South of Scotland 17, Glasgow Dist 22, Edinburgh Dist 45, N & Mid Scotland 0.
REPRESENTATIVE MATCH: Royal Navy 31, N Zealand Army 5.
CLUB MATCHES: Cambridge Univ 35, Steele-Bodger's XV 29. Cancelled: Treorchy v Fairwater.

Rugby League

STONES CENTENARY CHAMPIONSHIP: Warrington 47, Leeds 14; Workington 16, Castleford 22. First Division: Batley 12, Salford 12; Huddersfield 14, Wakefield 22. Second Division: Carlisle 40, York 8; Chorley 17, Leigh 29; Highfield 16, Barrow 44; Hull KR 56, Doncaster 4, Swinton 25, Bramley 7.

Golf

AMERICAN EXPRESS TOUR QUALIFYING SCHOOL (La Manga): Second round scores (GB/Ire unless stated): 143 T Craik 71, 72. 144 A-M Knight (Aus) 75, 69. 145 T Loveys 72, 73. 147 E-J Smith 75, 72; I Tinning (Den) 71, 76. 148 R Bates (US) 75, 73; S Sharpe 72, 76; J Mills (Aus) 69, 79. 149 D Doniger (US) 72, 77; S Hanley (US) 74, 75; H Lee (Can) 77, 72; S Malin (Swe) 75, 74. 150 F Fehlauer (Ger) 75, 75; M Burstrom (Swe) 75, 75. 151 I Maconi (It) 79, 72; H Koch (Swe) 74, 77; E Engstrom (Swe) 75, 76; L Irvine 76, 75; S Elliott 77, 74; M McKinlay 71, 80.

Badminton

WORLD GRAND PRIX FINALS (Singapore): Men: First round: H Arbi (Indo) bt J Olsson (Swe) 15–8, 15–7; O Ewe Hock (Mal) bt P-E Hoyer Larsen (Den) 15–8, 15–8; J Suprianto (Indo) bt T Sian Peng (Sing) 15–4, 15–5; H Hendrawan (Indo) bt H Susanto (Indo) 15–9, 15–4; A Wiranata (Indo) bt F Permadi (Tai) 15–11, 15–4; R Sidek (Mal) bt L Kwan-jin (SKor) 15–11, 15–7; D Jiong (China) bt J van Dijk (Neth) 15–8, 15–7; A Budi Kusuma (Indo) bt P Rasmussen (Den) 15–8, 15–12.

Basketball

NBA: Cleveland 93, Toronto 89; Miami 111, Dallas 89; New Jersey 89, Washington 84; New York 97, Atlanta 102 (ot); Milwaukee 98; Charlotte 108; Minnesota 121, Vancouver 98; Houston 116, LA Clippers 103; Seattle 101, Indiana 102; Sacramento 91, Denver 85.

Bowls

CIS INSURANCE SCOTTISH MASTERS (Coatbridge): Semi-finals: J Price (Wales) bt R Corsie (Scot) 7–1, 7–2; A Thomson (Eng) bt P Conlan (Scot) 7–3, 1–7, 7–1.

Boxing

PROFESSIONAL BILL (Bethnal Green): Southern Area Light-welterweight Title: Bernard Paul (Tottenham, holder) bt Jason Rowland (West Ham) ko 1.

Cricket

FINAL ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL (Bombay): New Zealand 126 (35 overs; Kumble 3–17, Srinath 2–22, Kapoor 2–33). India 128–4 (32 overs; Doull 3–42). India won by six wickets and the series 3–2.
ONE-DAY MATCH (Devonport): Tasmania 230–5 (50 overs, R Ponting 99, S Young 76). Sri Lanka 220–5 (45.2 overs; A de Silva 67). Sri Lanka won on faster scoring rate when rain ended play.

Hockey

REPRESENTATIVE: Oxford University 2 (MacDowell, Morley), Bacchanalians 0.

Ice Hockey

NHL: Detroit 3, Montreal 2; NY Islanders 3, Colorado 7; Pittsburgh 7, Ottawa 2; Winnipeg 4, Toronto 3; Edmonton 3, Chicago 5.

Snooker

UK CHAMPIONSHIP (Preston): Quarter-final: S Hendry (Scot) leads K Doherty (Ire) 6–2 (resumes 2.0 today).

Squash

QATAR INTERNATIONAL: Second round: D Harris (Eng) bt T Hands (Eng) 17–15, 15–4, 15–6; P Gregory (Gr) bt Mir Zaman Gul (Pak) 15–6, 15–8, 15–10; D Jenson (Aus) bt J Bonetat (Fr) 11–15 15–6, 15–8, 15–13; B Martin (Aus) bt A Barada (Egypt) 15–10, 10–15, 15–11, 15–8; Jansher Khan (Pak) bt J Nicolle (Eng) 15–5, 15–2, 15–6; M Chaloner (Eng) bt C Wapnick (SA) 15–7, 12–15, 15–6, 7–15, 15–11; R Eyles (Aus) bt D Meddings (Eng) 11–15, 15–7, 15–8, 15–10; P Nicol (Scot) bt S Elopuro (Fin) 15–10, 15–3, 15–9.

Fixtures

(7.30 unless stated)

Soccer

PONTINS LEAGUE (7.0): First: Oldham v Sheff Wed; Stoke v Blackburn. Second: Hull v A Villa; Coventry v Grimsby.
AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First Division: Bristol C v Swindon.
LEAGUE OF IRELAND: Premier Division: Dundalk v Athlone Tn (7.45).

Rugby League

ALLIANCE: Castleford v Wigan; Dewsbury v Warrington; Leeds v St Helens; Oldham v Bradford. First Division: Featherstone v Widnes; Keighley v Wakefield; York v Halifax. Second Division: Huddersfield v Swinton; Rochdale v Batley.

Basketball

7-UP TROPHY: Quarter-final, second leg: Derby v Worthing (8.0).

Cricket

SECOND CASTLE TEST MATCH (*Johannesburg): SA v England (8.30am).
SECOND TEST (*Rawalpindi): Pakistan A v England A (5.0am).

Ice Hockey

BRITISH LEAGUE: First Division: Medway v Manchester (8.0); Swindon v Chelmsford (8.15).

● The All-England badminton champion Poul-Erik Hoyer Larsen of Denmark suffered a shock defeat in his opening first-round match in the World Grand Prix finals in Singapore yesterday. Larsen, one of the favourites in the event, was beaten 15–8, 15–8 by Malaysia's Ong Ewe Hock in the group stage, which is played on a round-robin basis. The other Malaysian in the tournament, Rashid Sidek also scored an upset, beating the South Korean Lee Kwan-jin 15–11, 15–7. Indonesia's Heryanto Arbi, Joko Suprianto, Ardy Wiranata and H Hendrawan all won easily, while China's Dong Jiong beat Jaron van Dijk of the Netherlands 15–8, 15–7.

● Anatoly Karpov, the world chess champion, and the leading Bulgarian Vesselin Topalov will meet for two games a day on December 3, 4 and 5 in the Bulgarian Black Sea port of Varna. Topalov, who is seventh in International Chess Federation rankings, has lost to Karpov three times and has had two draws. But he has beaten all the players in the top 10 apart from Karpov.

● Today's second Test between the England and Pakistan A teams is almost certain to start late because of a wet square and conditions are so poor that the game might not even get underway until tomorrow. Yesterday's heavy rain seeped under the tarpaulin covering used at Rawalpindi's KRL Ground and it has left a pitch with the consistency of wet plasticine, surrounded by muddy patches covering the rest of the square. Reconstruction work at Rawalpindi's main cricket stadium, to prepare it for the three World Cup matches to be staged here in February and March, means that the second Test has had to be played on a ground belonging to the Civil Aviation Authorities.

Middlesbrough 0, Birmingham City 0

Grey night at the Riverside as the Blues stifle Boro

Ian Ross

THIS was a rather bleak evening for those who believe the League Cup represents Middlesbrough's best chance of achieving tangible success in what will be a season of discovery.

It could actually have been a good deal worse, for on countless occasions Birmingham City threatened to punctuate some forceful soccer with what would have been the decisive goal. In the end they did not, but the moral victory was theirs and they will enter the tie's replay with understandable confidence.

Soccer may represent a broad church these days, but it is rather difficult to see the new Riverside Stadium as a cathedral. A hastily erected edifice of concrete and glass, unsympathetically located on the wrong side of the tracks, it is a strangely soulless place lost in its own vastness.

Of course the arrival on Teesside of Juninho, a player of genuine world class, has helped the more puritanical among the Middlesbrough faithful to stomach the move from Ayresome Park. The tiny Brazilian would be feted wherever he chose to play, such are his powers of improvisation and his quite extraordinary vision.

This was a real test — perhaps the first one — for the frail youngster, for Birmingham are not noted for taking prisoners. Juninho successfully rode both his luck and some furious tackles until the 16th minute, when John Frain sent him cartwheeling through the air. Frain was booked, Juninho bruised.

Sadly, there was no samba beat to this match. It was traditional cup-tie fare, all frantic effort and misplaced passes. Juninho's glorious free-kick against the face of the crossbar apart, the first half was a desert in search of an oasis.

Ironically, after contributing muscle, and muscle alone, Birmingham almost embarrassed their hosts on the half-hour when Steve Castle's shot from distance almost found its intended target.

Birmingham, simply by increasing the tempo of their game, drew the fluency out of Middlesbrough's and unquestionably held the whip hand.

And they almost scored on 55 minutes when a Kevin Francis header which seemed to drift goalwards in slow motion struck the foot of a post.

Middlesbrough: Walsh; Cox, Vickers, Pearson, Morris, Pollock, Juninho, Liddle, Stamp, Barmby, Fjortoft (Hignett, 72min).
Birmingham City: Bennett; Forsythe, Edwards, Daish, Johnson (Donowa, 45), Hunt, Castle, Hill, Frain, Claridge, Francis.
Referee: W Burns (Scarborough).

Ireland leave space for Keane

JACK CHARLTON has left a place open for Roy Keane in the Republic of Ireland squad to face Holland in the European Championship play-off at Anfield on December 13. The Manchester United midfielder had a hernia operation three weeks ago.

SQUAD: A Kelly (Sheff Utd), Bonner (Celtic); Irwin (Man Utd), G Kelly (Leeds), Kenna (Blackburn), McGrath (Aston Villa), Babb (Liverpool), Phelan (Chelsea), Staunton (Aston Villa), Sheridan (Sheff Wed), Houghton (Crystal Palace), McAteer (Liverpool), Milligan (Norwich), Townsend (Aston Villa), McLoughlin (Portsmouth), D Kelly (Sunderland), Aldridge (Tranmere), Cascarino (Marseille), Kennedy (Liverpool), Morris (Middlesbrough), Kernaghan (Man City).

Wales name rugby coach, page 14

Coca-Cola Cup soccer, page 15

Le Saux and Batty banned, page 15

Lima inflicts punishment, page 14

SportsGuardian

COCA-COLA CUP: FOURTH ROUND

Liverpool 0, Newcastle United 1

Watson the Reds' scourge

David Lacey

STEVE WATSON continues to plague Liverpool. Having scored Newcastle United's winner against them in the Premier League 3½ weeks earlier, he came off the bench at Anfield last night to loosen their grip on the Coca-Cola Cup with a delightful chip-shot in the 77th minute.

Obviously Newcastle would prefer to enter Europe next season in the Champions' League. A clutter of cup-ties in the spring might complicate this aim, yet there was no questioning their desire for victory last night.

Their support and the Anfield old boys on the bench, Kevin Keegan and Terry McDermott, demanded it and their record of 15 wins and one defeat in 18 matches demanded it. Liverpool, moreover, were looking vulnerable, having lost four of their previous five fixtures, with the other one drawn.

Nevertheless Liverpool were the League Cup holders and had the memory of dominating Newcastle in their Premiership match at St James' Park at the start of the month before losing to a late goal.

Redknapp, crucial to that Liverpool performance, was still unfit last night, which gave Newcastle a distinct advantage, given the passing skills of Beardsley and Clark and Lee's ability to take the ball past defenders.

Much depended on Liverpool being able to give Collymore and Fowler the support Ferdinand was guaranteed at the other end, and the game's first clear chance reflected their ability to do so.

In the ninth minute McManaman and Collymore worked the ball to Fowler. He had only Hislop to beat, but did not shoot first time and the goalkeeper managed to scramble the ball away.

Newcastle countered vigorously. Lee, sent clear by Beardsley, saw a narrow-angle shot held by James, and then curled a shot past goalkeeper and far post after Ferdinand had laid Barton's pass into his path.

Midway through the first half Fowler stepped over a low cross from McManaman, freeing Barnes for a low shot which brought a diving save from Hislop.

Newcastle were gnawing at the suspect left side of Liverpool's defence, leaving Ginola only sporadically employed on the other flank.

Towards the half-hour good defending at both ends prevented likely goals. Babb quite legally blocked out Ferdinand as he moved to meet a cross from Ginola, then Peacock's stretching interception denied Collymore the chance to exploit a dipping centre from Jones.

By half-time the match had lived up its promise in terms of imaginative attacking football from both sides but still awaited the quality of finishing to convert this into goals.

At the beginning of the second half Collymore darted through the Newcastle centre-backs, but Barton was alive to the danger and wafted the ball clear.

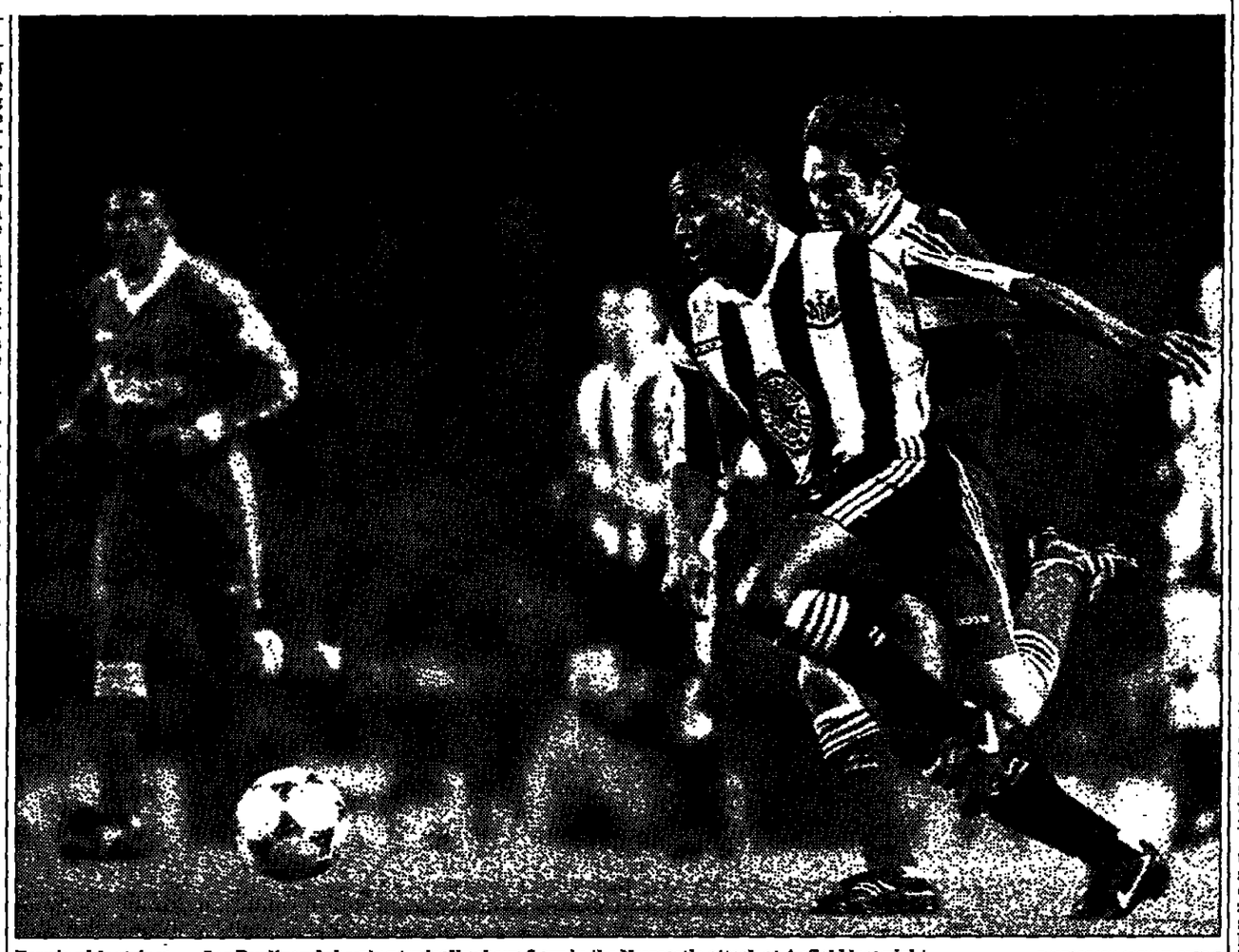
A few minutes later Peacock was forced into an attitude of prayer as he went down on his knees to chest away a low centre from Beardsley. The match was praying for a goal but still the final touch eluded it.

The chances of Ferdinand taking Newcastle to the quarter-finals disappeared just before the hour when he came off worse in a clash of heads with Wright and suffered a nasty gash to the temple. Watson, whose goal had beaten Liverpool at St James' Park, replaced him.

Soon after this Liverpool lost Ruddock, who had suffered a strain stretching to intercept Beardsley, from their defence. But now their attacks carried marginally more threat and Hislop had to move quickly to prevent Beresford's underhit backpass being seized by Collymore.

Eventually Watson's portentous presence undid Liverpool. Gathering a ball from Beardsley, and completely on his own, he appeared to be waiting for support. The Liverpool defence, meanwhile, just waited. Then Watson spotted James moving off his line and beat him with an impudent chip into the top right-hand corner of the net.

Liverpool: James; Jones, Wright, Ruddock, Babb; McManaman, McAteer, Barnes, Harkness, Fowler, Collymore.
Newcastle United: Hislop; Barton, Peacock, Howey, Beresford, Gillespie, Lee, Clark, Ginola, Ferdinand, Beardsley.
Referee: P Durkin (Portland).



Earning his stripes . . . Les Ferdinand showing typically sharp form in the Newcastle attack at Anfield last night PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

'Mixed' boxing banned after Glasgow riot

Jack Massarik

MIXED shows — boxing promotions for diners but where non-diners can pay to join the audience later in the evening — were yesterday outlawed by the British Boxing Board of Control.

It was at a mixed show in Glasgow last month that rioting broke out at the end of the British bantamweight fight between James Murray and Drew Docherty. The disorderly crowd scenes, shown on television, were particularly distasteful because in those tragic moments Murray was lying fatally injured on the canvas. Knocked out in the 12th and final round, he died in hospital.

Yesterday a BBBC tribunal, chaired by its president Sir David Hopkin and stewards including the vice-chairman Leonard Read, the shadow sports minister Tom Pendry MP, and Lord Brooks of Tremorfa, found that no blame could be attached to the promoters, Frank Warren and Katherine Morrison, who had notified local police in advance of the event, or to the venue, the Hospitality Inn hotel.

Morrison had run mixed shows successfully for five years but this format, the board decided, was the probable cause of the trouble.

"We had a long look into the many aspects of mixed boxing evenings, which could be difficult to control," said the board's secretary John Morris.

The riot had involved spectators who had bought tickets for the boxing only. These men had not dined, but some had evidently been drinking instead.

"Don't call this a riot," Morris stressed after yesterday's four-hour meeting. "It was not a riot, it was a disturbance and something we do not want to see happen again.

"Of course this does not mean the end of dinner shows at such hotels as the Grosvenor House, only those shows where the public are allowed in after dinner to watch the boxing."

More than one ball in the back of the net



John Duncan

WHOEVER called looking around the Internet "surfing" needs shooting. Surfing is sea, sand and the open air; trawling the Internet means screens, sandwiches and an open telephone line. Spotty youths do it — in their bedroom, on their own. And there's loads of porn. Well, maybe. But, as a confirmed pervert of the football variety, let me tell you why football on the Internet tickles my chips.

The first barrier on anyone's voyage of Internet discovery is the weird language that regular commuters on the information highway choose to use. Let them take their backslashes and their .htmls and upload them into their lower intestine.

All they are hiding from those of us for whom terminal means terminal decline (as in Fulham) and baud is what you feel when Arsenal are in town is that finding information on subjects you never knew you were interested in is unbelievably easy — and not just soccer but broomball, transmitter hunting and danball in more than 100 sports on line.

Can there be a greater joy than knowing you have instant access to the obsessions of e-males such as Sergio Bonzani, a graduate student in statistics who runs the Atalanta Canada Fan club from his abode in Ontario. You can talk to other Canadian Atalanta fans and download biographies, photos and match reports about, well, Atalanta.

NEXT stop: tap in Stoichkov and the technology will churn out every site where the name crops up. Of course the stupid machine cannot tell you are mainlining football trivia, so as well as Hristo, Parma's bad-tempered Balkan superstar, it offers the latest theses of Bulgarian macrobiologists of the same name. There is also a file containing frequently asked questions about Bulgaria. Among these is that Hristo Stoichkov was born in Plovdiv 8-2-1966.

Chance across the Schraag Soccer pages and lose yourself in the complete tables of the Dutch League for the past 40 years. Use your skill to predict the results of the Dutch first and second division matches to win cash. Fortuna 54 were second in 1957. You didn't know that? You do now.

But the service is not perfect. Almost all the domestic soccer information on the Internet is available elsewhere and in the time it takes to unload some flies you could write a reference book, let alone pull one off the shelf. Most of the "news" is out of date and cribbed from newspapers. Yesterday the Wolves page offering "latest" news from the club had last been updated on November 24; a remarkable 5,610 people had visited the site since November 15. All this information might be fine for a follower of the minutiae of international football but why should anyone follow a local team on the web?

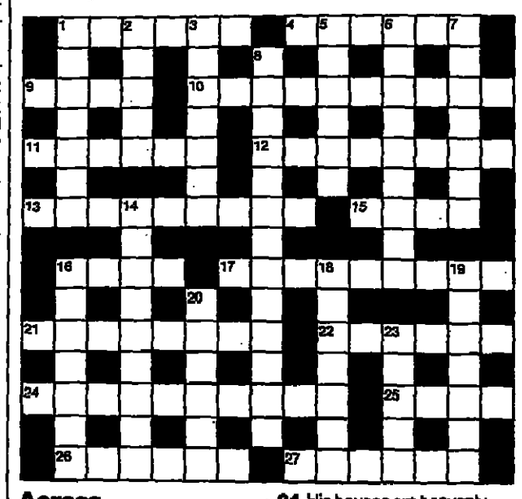
"That's a fair point," said Russel Goldsmith, who works for a computer company, Harlequin, and is a regular visitor to the Spurs site, which he checks out on company time "for research". "The major benefit comes to people outside the UK who find it hard to get information. I know a guy who supports Watford and he was in Sweden one weekend, went into a Cybercafe, logged on and got a full match report of Watford v Barnsley. That's what it's all about really." Match reports get on more quickly than news.

THE electronic mailing lists, effectively computerised football chatlines, are among the web's most popular football offerings. "It gives people a chance to communicate if they can't get to a pub," said Ivan Cohen, Tottenham fan and lecturer at Imperial College management school. "I go to reserve games and put on match reports and gossip. But a lot of the people abroad who can't get to matches enjoy the non-match-report stuff because it makes them feel they were there, like they broke down on the M6 and got stuck in traffic for five hours."

The Spurs list has 600 subscribers; most know one another, meet in the Railway Tavern before games, go out for meals and run a football team (who lost 2-0 to Cybery Arsenal recently). "We had a subscriber recently who turned up for football training from Finland," said Cohen. "Some of us stand together at reserve matches. Once we saw Ray Harford at a match and put out a totally made-up rumour on the list for a bit of fun that he was there to watch Dumitrescu. It was an exclusive in a tabloid newspaper the next day. So someone must be listening."

Guardian Crossword No 20,512

Set by Rufus

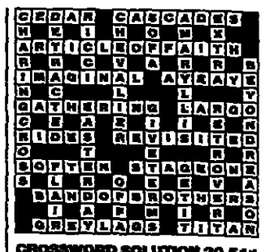


Across

1 Temple where father is filled with a divine spirit (6)
4 Rich enough to have the power to fire (6)
9 Left in charge but desert one's post (4)
10 Noisy outburst of four voices (10)
11 He's in charge but has a leader (6)
12 Fruit crop? It's a disaster (8)
13 A host of local supporters (9)
15 Note purpose of knot (4)
16 Deposits of Ancient Rome perhaps (4)
17 The criminal is also a healer (9)
21 Spot of color trouble in America (8)
22 Cleaner air can't be found here (6)
24 His houses are heavenly (10)
25 Weapons some people play with (4)
26 Simulated tears shed by Zulu leader (6)
27 Publicity is about over for this handsome youth (6)

Down

1 I'd a plan to become a knight errant (7)
2 Gang leader about — at large (5)
3 Terribly grieved, draw apart (7)
5 One has gathered wood for burning (2,4)
6 Most inexpensive hat priced wrongly (4,5)
7 Frustrated by undated form (7)
8 Fiddle just enough to satisfy the examiner? (6,7)
14 Vital panels on computers (9)
16 Inspection of river rising in Cornish resort (4-3)
18 Greatly honoured, though always getting into debt (7)
19 Complaints of wives about the week-end (7)
20 The favourite's all in — made to carry a big weight (6)
23 Shanty for the rest of the sailors (5)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,511

Solution tomorrow

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